

BEST
SHORT STORIES
FROM THE
SOUTHWEST

Edited by HILTON R. GREER





BEST SHORT STORIES FROM THE SOUTHWEST

EDITED BY
HILTON ROSS GREER



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PREFACE

THE typical short story of the Southwest wears the colors of sun and sand and saddle-leather. This volume offers the reader a more varied exhibit. Four of the sixteen stories might be termed typical; others touch upon the nearer regions of the Southwest that are less familiar to readers of fiction; the scenes of still others are alien to the Southwestern country.

This is not, therefore, a collection of Southwestern short stories. It is, as it was designed to be, a collection of short stories by Southwestern writers. A few of the writers in this company no longer are citizens of the Southwest, but these have place here by right of nativity, of extended earlier residence, and of distinguished achievement.

The stories, as they are presented, fall logically into groupings. Three of the true or traditional West have first introduction to the readers; as many, following them, smack unmistakably of the soil of Texas. Romance and adventure, staged in foreign fields, have their way in others. There are examples of impressive characterization and of stark realism that go to the heart of life as life is any-

PREFACE

where, and the collection is rounded out with three stories that are distinctively humorous.

Acknowledgment, which is set down more specifically in connection with each story, is here made to the authors, to the editors of magazines and to the publishers of individual volumes of short stories, for permission to reprint. The editor makes grateful acknowledgment as well to Imogene Greer, his wife, for aid in the initial work of exploration and discovery; to John H. McGinnis, of the English Department, Southern Methodist University, and Literary Editor of the *Dallas Morning News*, and to Miss Cleora Clanton, Librarian of the Dallas Public Library, for special courtesies.

DALLAS,

September, 1928.

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BEST SHORT STORIES FROM THE SOUTHWEST

PAPAGO KID¹

By MARY AUSTIN

THE first time I met him, said the engineer of Socorro Float, who told me this story, was on the trail called Jornada del Muerte, Journey of Death, which sure is well named. And that's an odd sort of coincidence when you come to think of it. Jornada del Muerte is the only passable trail from Sonora to the California Gulf, and in the whole two hundred miles there are only two certain places where a man can find water. I was about all in myself when I reached the Tinajas Atlas, and found this Papago Kid, as we afterward called him, camping alongside of it.

He'd had a bad fall making the first stage of the journey, and all the water his cracked canteen would hold wouldn't have kept a gopher's tongue from going black between there and Yuma. But there he was with his grub sack nearer empty than

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even yet I like to remember, but quite comfortable in his mind because he had begun to feel me come about the time I must have been sagging over Two Angels Dip twelve hours earlier. He said he had felt me there, and again at Cabeza de Torro, which is a way of talking I have noticed in men whose work keeps them loose in the open, as if they spread themselves with an odd kind of certainty over a great deal more territory than a man can actually cover with his five senses. But the Papago Kid. . . .

No, he wasn't a Papago. Irish. Black Irish from New Jersey. I've no doubt he was descended from kings and his people at home had a banshee, but all that was left of his Irish inheritance was the touch of mysticism and the incurable youth that started everybody calling him "Kid" as soon as they knew him. He told me his name once, but it is as "the Kid" we always spoke of him. "Papago" was added because of a kind of jealous infatuation he had for the country that is as lovely as a woman and has all a woman's trick of looking soft as a summer and being utterly ruthless. Also there was a girl over toward Comobabi—but that came afterward.

Naturally I took the Kid into Yuma with me and paid myself for it by lecturing him in a fatherly kind of way for roaming around reckless in a country that even the buzzards abandon.

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"One of these days, Kid," I told him, "you'll be lying down between water holes and you won't get up again, and then what?"

"Oh then, my soul will go marchin' on," he flipped. "I was on my way," he said, "to see the palo verde bloom around Tumummoc. I don't doubt I'd have made it."

Somehow the country is like that; gets a grip on you that's stronger than anything living, stronger than death maybe. . . .

Well . . . I left the Kid at Yuma waiting for a train to take him back to Tucson in time for the palo verde. He had a little money, he told me, that came to him regularly, but I never found that he used it for any purpose but taking him from place to place in a country too big for any man to get around in satisfactorily on his own feet. For the little that he needed to live on—and it was little enough—he would tie up for a job of work for a few weeks or months at some of the mines. That was how I ran into him again at Quijotoa where I was cleaning up a lot of old tailings. He stayed with me the whole of one fall and winter, and I'd have given him anything in reason to keep him on, for the kid was the sort of company a man grows to hanker for when he is set down beside a hole in the ground years on end, a day and a half from anywhere in particular. He was better educated than the common run of mining men, and had read

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extensively the oddest, most unrelated things. He told me that he was quite alone, had been brought up by a maiden aunt who had died when he was about seventeen—it was from what she had left him that his remittance came—and that a year or two after her death a weakness of the lungs had developed. This had brought him to the west and the open, to Ashfork to be exact, and from there he had worked across between the Rio Grande and the Colorado, as far north as the Cañon de Chelly and south pretty much all over Sonora.

If you think that *you* have seen the west—I tell you it was the Kid's peep-show! For a matter of ten years nothing worth seeing went on in it, but waited until he had arrived from Mesa Verde or Indio or Chilchilicalli, for the curtain to go up.

I am a practical man, and an engineer. I deal with material things, and materials the most stubborn and irreducible, ores and raw metals and the solid matrix of the earth. But I ended by believing that the Kid had a special faculty for knowing what was, at any given moment, going on in any one of the places he loved.

"I'm feelin' the day at Oraibi," he would say. "The peach orchards at the foot of the third mesa will be bustin' out to bloom." Or, "You'll overlook my bein' late with the balance sheets, Mr. Strangworth, but there's a wind turnin' up the undersides of the sage beyond Tumummoc, white,

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like the feet of a girl under green water." It didn't in the least matter that it was three or five days to the place he'd been mooning about. And when the spell was on him to take the road, there was nothing would keep him. I know because I tried once, when I was fearfully short handed, holding back his wages on one excuse or another. He filled up his grub sack from my stores one night, and the next morning all I found was a note saying where I could send his pay check.

He visited me several times at Quijotoa, staying from three to five months at a time, and when I was managing the Silver Lead in the Santa Catalinas, he turned up again. It was there that he fell in with Red Morgan.

Red was plain hobo. Drink and a general distrust of all forms of industry had reduced him to a state in which he had lost control of his life to the chance of the hour. He would hire himself out to get money for drink—atrocious *aguardiente* the Greasers smuggled in to him—and drink until he was fired. Then he would drift on to the next mine or the next camp as the case might be, and begin all over. He was strong as an ox, and for that sort of man, sympathetic; and he had the remnants of an inherited refinement. I shouldn't wonder indeed, if he had come from social strata a little above that of the Kid's, and had taken to bumming through being naturally deficient in the

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capacity for self-direction. At any rate they struck up the sort of relationship that one finds occasionally between a boy and an ownerless pup. The Kid did about as he pleased with Morgan, and Morgan groveled and came back for more.

The Kid, who just naturally hated drunkenness the way the Irish do hate it when they don't take to it like ducks to water, used regularly to banish Red from his society when the drinking bouts would begin. Then Morgan would weep in his cups and insist that between friends there should be complete personal autonomy. Finally he would discover that the Kid had taken the road without him and he would set out, half sober, his tongue literally hanging out with anxiety to find him and be taken on again.

I suspect that Morgan's abounding health and physical energy was one of the bonds between them. Probably he knew more of his friend's own weakness in that direction than the rest of us, for with all his bitter tirades against the Kid's misuse of him, I never heard Red complain of what we all knew to be the case, that he carried not only their primitive camp outfit, but often, in addition to his own, the Kid's blanket. Except to tell me that the infection which had driven him west in the first place, had been completely healed, the Kid never talked of his ailment. But it had left him practically with only one lung, and more than ordi-

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narily sensitive to altitude sickness. Anyway, for one reason or another, this oddly assorted pair kept together for the better part of six years, dropping in on us when they were hard up, or occasionally, I like to believe, because the Kid really enjoyed a chin with me.

He had worked out quite a philosophy of life in his travels, but he grew more and more silent concerning the things he saw in them, so that it was really from Red Morgan that we heard about the girl at Comobabi. I don't know if the girl comes into this story. I don't really know. However, it's to find out the rights of the story that I'm telling it at all. Maybe when I am through you'll know.

Papagueria is a wonderful country . . . white bean country! It begins about the Gila river and the Rio Santa Cruz, and goes indefinitely south into Sonora. From San Xavier del Bac to Quitovaquita it is about a hundred and twenty miles in an air line. Up one side and down the other of the great edgewise ranges, it's farther than a well man can travel in a week. In between there are lovely valleys where the ground is yielding under foot, the foliage of the palo verde is delicate as a woman's hair, and the air is soft against the skin like veils. It is a blue country, blue and white, white cloud and white sand, with all the ranges melting into blueness, and the pale greens turning

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to blue in the shadows. There's bisnaga, that's barrel cactus, and great marching suhauros and feathery mesquite with hundred-year-old twisted trunks. By the time you get past Robles Pass into one of those little villages where time goes by as still as the drift of foam on a wave, you don't wonder they called themselves the People of the Bean. I give you my word that the bean, with its broad quiet leaves, its white scented blossoms above them, and its delicately inquiring tip, is a beautiful, a magical plant. There's corn there and melons, quail calling in the mesquite, and rest.

The girl was the daughter of the head man in one of their villages. He'd squatted on one of those little water sinks like some old sheik on an oasis, and between his beans and a few head of stock he'd picked up, he was pretty well fixed for that country. The Kid used to drop in on him ever so often, and once they nursed him through one of his bad spells, so that it came perfectly natural, when the girl fell in love with him, for the old *capitán* to make an offer of her and her affection to the Papago Kid, at one of their big eats in the presence of all the company. By all accounts the Kid must have been horribly embarrassed, trying to get out of it and at the same time save the girl's feelings. I had Red Morgan's word for it that she was both pretty and good. Red was indignant with the Kid for not falling in with what

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he considered a particularly soft snap. As I said, Red knew more of his *compadre's* weakness than any of us, and I think he was tormented by the fear that the time would come, and that soon, when the Kid would need a good deal more than his income or than Red could earn, to make him comfortable. These lungers sometimes take a long time dying. But get out of marrying her the Kid did, with some kind of credit, owing to his being Irish and to the girl's not understanding white custom. He established himself as a kind of perpetual, official fiancé, who turned up regularly with presents and no end of ceremony.

I took the liberty of speaking to him about it once after Red had been indulging in one of his tirades. It seemed somehow a pity, seeing the lad wasn't long for this world, that he shouldn't have something of the common destiny—a home, you know, and kids . . . even brown ones. Those Papagos aren't a bad sort, and the little he could have left the girl when he went out would have made up to her. So I spoke to him one evening when the world had turned all holy, as it does sometimes about sundown, and we were sitting together with a pipe on the dump outside the Silver Lead.

The Kid sort of flushed up. "It isn't because she's Papago," he broke out; "she's as white inside as anybody!"

"And it isn't because you're too good for her,"

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I put in; "I'll lay my hat you were brought up a Catholic, and you could make it all right with Father Saladra."

"Oh, I'd marry her, if I did anything," he admitted. "You see that streak of road out there?" he said, pointing where it went winding away between the hills as if it were in a hurry to get somewhere it never reached. "Well, I'd naturally up and die if ever there came a time when I couldn't just take the road when it calls me. It's death maybe that's been chasin' me all these years, but I know that I just got to keep goin'. And how would that do for a wife and kids?"

"You'd come back," I told him.

"Not if I thought I had to. It's knowin' that I don't have to, that keeps me goin' there regular. Gee!" he said, "but I can't bear the thought of lyin' still, even in my grave." That was the last talk I ever had with him.

Along in the early winter Red slouched in looking for a job, soberer than I'd ever known him to be. He wouldn't tell me anything at first about the Kid except that he was in the lunger's hospital at Tucson, and by degrees he let out that it wouldn't have happened if the Kid hadn't been such a Quixotic fool about the girl. It seemed that the Kid, who had felt a bad spell coming on, had turned in at the Oasis for a rest and a few weeks of regular meals. He'd a more than ordi-

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narily handsome present for the girl in his pack, and according to Red he was more than ordinarily in the mood to settle down with her and behave in a fashion that Red never characterized by any word but "regular." They were pretty well spent by the time they got in, for the nights had suddenly turned cold and they had traveled all the last day in one of those blinding storms of dust that rise about the beginning of the rains. The Kid was coughing steadily in the dust, and saying more than Red had known him to say before, of how good it would be to get between the clean dark walls of a *jacal* to rest. All the time, as if he had a kind of sense of its being necessary to get there somehow in spite of everything, he kept on beating his way through the wall of dust when he ought to have been lying under a mesquite asleep. They dropped the wind behind them in the night, and about midmorning, as they sighted the smoke of the *jacal* between the little oaks, they heard the *tombes* going, and one of those four-stringed Yaqui harps.

You see the girl's old man had got tired of this ceremonious engagement that never came to anything. He wanted a regular son-in-law, and what Red and the Kid had stumbled on was the infare of the girl's marriage to a regular husband which had taken place the night before.

The present came in handily, but I take it the

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groom was none too well pleased or the girl too much so. Red and the Kid slept under a mesquite on the way back to Pantac, where the first of the rains found them, and stuck to their trail all the way to Robles Pass. It was there the drenching he had, and maybe feeling what he'd lost at last, put the Kid in the hospital.

That year I began to be interested in this Socorro proposition and was in San Francisco interviewing the owners when Red and the Kid paid us their usual spring visit. And, it just happened that I was off at the other side of Papagueria looking for a man who was said to be able to make repairs on a Diesel engine, when they came back in the fall.

That was the first year of the influenza epidemic in these parts. And for all we were so isolated, it reached us while I was away from camp and nipped off half a dozen of my best men. Mind you though, I had heard nothing of it when I came back after a ten days' absence, making Robles Pass about the middle of the afternoon on Tuesday. Tuesday. Along about four of the clock.

I was driving my own car with only a Papago swamper, making time on the road from Quitovaquita. You know how it is about that time of day, when the shadows begin to come out of the cañons and stretch themselves, and the air next to the ground grows lighter as if the earth gave back

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some of the brightness it had absorbed during the day. Off to the westward the Baboquivaris were thinning like a veil, and I was thinking of nothing in particular but the faint green tinge climbing up the dry stems of the ocotillo, which is the first notice that the year has turned on its axis.

All at once the swamper nudged me. "Man," he said. "White man, walking."

I looked up and saw him considerably to the left, bearing off toward Pantac, which is the first of the Papago villages. He was beyond hail, but even at that distance, a moment later, I knew him. It was Red Morgan packing his blanket and looking neither to the right nor the left of him.

"He's going to tell the girl," I said to myself; and then, "That's funny," I said, because there wasn't anything I could think of that he had to tell, or that the Kid himself wouldn't have told her. And I said to myself again that the Kid had been combing Red's hair for him, for if ever there was a hobo had his tail between his legs as he slouched along, it was Red Morgan.

"White man heap damn sorry," said the Papago, which seemed about the sense of things. I thought that Red must have been drinking worse than usual for the Kid to have laid into him like that, and then I saw him. The Kid I mean. He'd been lagging behind a bit, and the tops of the mesquite had hid him. I had an idea though he was

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feeling particularly fine, by the way he stepped along at Red's shoulder, Red carrying the outfit as usual. I half stopped the car, thinking to speak to them, but it was too far for that. They must have recognized me though, for just as I let out the gas again the Kid turned and waved his hat at me.

That was all there was to it; my thinking how well the Kid looked and feeling sorry for old Morgan and wondering if the Kid wasn't a bit hard on him. At Tucson where I stopped that night I heard that the flu had been at my camp and that Doc Stivers, who was the company's official physician, was up there with them, quarantined. He was waiting for me at the office when I got in, for of course I went in without losing any time. It was my business to be where the men were.

"Seen anybody on the road?" was almost the first thing he asked me.

"Red Morgan," I said; "over toward Baboquivari."

I don't know why I didn't say "Papago Kid," and so make my everlasting reputation with the Psychic Research Society, but I didn't. The little cherub that sits up aloft and looks after those things wasn't working on the job that day. I just said "Red Morgan," and let it go at that.

"Damn hobo," said the doctor; "breaking quarantine! Gone to tell the girl, I suppose. And now

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I'll have the whole Papago nation on my hands. He disappeared directly after the funeral, but it never occurred to me that that was what he was up to."

"Whose funeral?" I said, not taking it in yet.

"The Kid's. He was one of our first cases. No stamina of course, and only a fraction of a lung!"

"Look here," I said. "Let's get this thing straight. I saw Red Morgan making Papagueria on Tuesday. You mean to tell me that Red and the Kid—" I was considerably staggered.

"Blew in here the first of the week," says Stivers, kind of crisp like. "The Kid was taken down Thursday, bad. We buried him Sunday."

THE AWAKENING¹

By JOSEPH HALL RANSON

THE man pulled up and dismounted to tighten the saddle girth. He had done this three times during the last day and night, and the enfeebled animal unresistingly allowed him to repeat the operation. Both were white with dust, but of the two the lower animal had borne the brunt of the hardship and was the more exhausted. He staggered slightly as the man wearily drew himself back into the saddle and looked about. The man's face was haggard and his lips were dry and cracked with the heat. Strapped to the saddle was a holster containing a revolver, and on the other side, protected by a coat tied around it, was a canteen. The horse stood with his head nearly touching his knees and his legs apart as if to brace himself.

The outlook was not cheering. To the left the sun was halfway between zenith and horizon, but to man and beast his heat seemed as intense as when he stood directly above their heads. They stood, as it were, in the midst of a great ocean of

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chalk, with gigantic, undulating billows rolling away on every side. One of these had just been passed, and now they stood in a hollow surrounded by the silent dunes. All day this had been the routine of their journey. Up a gentle incline to the summit, hoping, praying for a change of view; down again on the other side, bitter disappointment sharply combating the hope that forced them to the next ascent. Now they had stopped again to rest the horse and give him a chance to breathe more easily the hot, dry air through which the heat waves shimmered. An occasional uneasy breeze drove the dust into clouds which hovered grotesquely for a while above the earth, and then, with the passing of the wind, settled slowly back.

The man untied the coat about the canteen and unscrewed the top. He tilted it to his lips and allowed a few drops to trickle through them down his throat. Then he screwed the top on again, and, holding the canteen to his ear, shook it slightly. The easy slush of the liquid told him it filled barely half the vessel. He tied the coat carefully about it again and strapped it to the saddle.

He kicked the horse gently in the ribs and tightened his pull on the rein, but the animal did not stir. Again he kicked and a trifle harder, but the horse stood with his head drooping listlessly, his legs far apart. The man pulled off his hat and reaching along the horse's neck struck him sharply

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on the ear. The horse started, raised his head a trifle, and staggered forward. He took a few hesitating steps and stumbled, caught himself, stumbled again and collapsed. The man cursed softly as he dragged his leg from beneath the fallen animal. Then he stood up and regarded his exhausted mount, and his face was haggard with the touch of a great fear. He seized the animal's head in desperation and shook him fiercely. The eyes opened and looked appealingly and hopelessly at the master, but the horse made no move to rise. A moment later the look of life went out of his eyes.

Of a sudden the full horror of the situation came upon the man and he caught in his breath quickly, leaning his knee against the body of the dead horse. The world swam dizzily before his startled, fearful eyes. The awful sense of his utter loneliness swept over him as a dark cloud. As long as the animal life of the horse existed near him—even by this knowledge of the existence of another life in the midst of the surrounding desolation of non-existence—he had been sustained and had not felt the touch of absolute loneliness which now overcame him. The horse seemed to be the only thing which had linked him to the living world that he had lost two days before in pursuit of an antelope, which had led him out of the timber and across a sweep of prairie and finally into the edge of the desert, where he had lost it and, endeavoring to retrace his

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steps, found himself lost too. And now the horse was dead. The man shuddered. On horseback he had failed to find his way out. Now he was afoot and alone. His face was drawn with the anguish of foreboding. Despite the heat a sort of ague possessed him and he shivered.

He stood up and shook himself. This was the part of a woman, a child. The world knew him as a man, a strong man, with will and brain and endurance. Even the cowboys had failed to break his spirit by long, arduous rides, bucking devil horses, and the vigils of the roundup. He had always been a rule unto himself, acknowledging none higher, God nor man. And here he was whimpering over a dead cayuse.

"Hell!" he muttered. His voice rasped sharply in the stillness, and his throat ached with the dryness.

He unstrapped the coat which held and protected the canteen, tied it carefully so as to leave a sling for the shoulder, and threw it across his arm. Then he slipped the holster and revolver from the other side of the saddle. There was nothing else to take. He drew the revolver from its case and examined it carefully, turning the cylinder methodically and peering into each succeeding empty chamber until he came to the last, which was not empty. He turned it three chambers farther on, and throwing the heavy belt and

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holster aside, slipped the weapon into his trousers pocket.

Upon the first swell of the sand plain the man came to a halt, and shading his eyes, searched the shimmering distances on every side for a sign of the longed-for timber or the full, grassy swell of the prairie. The sun was now well on the way to setting and the figure of the man cast its long, distorted shadow over the sparkling silica almost to the body of the horse. Miles stretched on miles of shimmering, brilliant, scintillating crystal.

The man turned to the right. He walked easily save for the shifting footing in some places where the sand was loose, but he unconsciously bent his head so that the hat-brim might shade his face. The heat burned through his shoes, and even this part of the day, which should be the coming of the cool, was terribly, unbearably hot. He kept his eyes steadily to the front, pursuing a direct course, shifting only when the footing seemed better or the impulse directed. He determined to follow a straight line, which would either lead him out or . . . He shuddered. Ah, but he would come out. But when? And would the water last? And would his strength hold out? His hand strayed to the trousers pocket. If the worst came—there was still one chamber loaded. He paused. Before him lay the skeleton of a cow or of a deer or some wild thing. He remembered having seen this before.

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Up the next rise slowly, with dragging step, then down—and there before him lay the horse, and the empty holster by its side.

Sprawled beside the body of the dead cayuse, giving no more evidence of life than a scarcely perceptible rise and fall of the breast, his mouth wide, the scorched lips drinking in the night-cooled air after the fiery inhalations of the day, the man slept heavily. The moon rose higher and higher, and the world stretched white and ghostlike, about the two silent, prostrate forms. Finally he shivered and opened his eyes. It was cold. He closed his eyes again and drew his coat about him. What did it mean? Was this another ghastly dream, or was he dead? He sat up, and his hand brushed the head of the animal beside him. He felt instinctively for his watch. It was running heedless of temperature, and registered three o'clock. The moon was now nearing the horizon. He marked its position with his eye. Then he drew himself into a standing position. He was stiff and the air was cold. He was revived to a great extent, however, and his skin felt cooled, his lips no longer baked and cracked. He picked up the canteen and shook it. It was alarmingly loud in its response. He stood for a moment, and attempted to read direction in the desert sands. Then he set out determinedly and hopefully to utilize this period of coolness in a last grim struggle for life.

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He grudged every minute of the passing coolness, every breath of the night air. But when the sun at last came lifting over the sand hills, there was still no sign of the prairie, no line of timber on the sky. The man threw the canteen over the other shoulder and pushed on doggedly. He walked with his head down, dreading the relentless heat that grew in intensity with every step. The chill fled from the air; the sun, rising, seemed to come closer at every stride.

At first he watched the sun climbing higher and higher, coming nearer and nearer, to his fevered brain growing hotter and hotter. It seemed to spring upward and nearer in a fiendish sort of way that fascinated the man, even as it scorched him and dried his lips and withered his strength. He began to wonder vaguely how near it would come before his clothing would blaze. He did not look at his watch again, marking the time by the approach of the sun, as a prisoner at the last marks the time he is yet to live by the footfalls of his jailer approaching to lead him to the scaffold.

He began to notice a falling off of the sand and an increase in the number of stones. They were white mostly, here and there a colored one, some reaching a fair size.

The man's mind was muddled; his brain was on fire. He rebelled against this for a time, for he was accustomed to work every problem of what-

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ever character out for himself, in terms of his own making, to his own satisfaction. It was this faculty of mastering difficulties that had made him his position in the world, and that, too, had made for him his own religion as well as his own leadership and power. It was this strong mind that had led him to question the very foundation of things, openly to express a disbelief, nay, a positive denial of the existence of a deity. And now for the first time this coadjutor had failed him, and he stumbled aimlessly along over the scattered gravel and loose sand, without thought, without motive, vaguely conscious of his own existence, wondering at his own movement and the utter absence of other moving things.

Presently his foot caught on a rock of larger size than usual and he fell headlong, bruising his right arm and cutting a gash in his forehead. He lay stunned for a while, and when his senses returned to him his arm throbbed painfully and his forehead was damp. He brushed the hair back with his hand, and it came back red.

The canteen lay a few feet away and he painfully crawled toward it. When he had unscrewed the top and tilted the vessel to his lips, a bare mouthful gurgled between them down his parched throat. He drained it and threw the empty flask to the ground. The sun was now almost directly above his head and the world danced away on every

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side in shimmering waves of heat. The man's eyes were bloodshot and sore, and a look of desperation, a kind of insanity, shone in their watery pupils. He put his hand to the trousers pocket. It was empty. Again to be sure of no deception, and then a feverish search of all the pockets, with the same result. A panic seized him and he almost tore the clothing from him in frenzy. He staggered to his feet and gazed wildly about him. A dozen feet away rose the stone whose treachery had caused his downfall. Closer the discarded canteen lay upon the sand and mocked him. He searched about in a widening circle, eagerly as one searching for a lost treasure, his back bent far over, his head almost to the waist, the hungry, insane eyes searching every foot of earth. He forgot the heat, the brilliancy of the sand which smarted his eyes, the discomfort of his bowed limbs. Further and further he drew away from the canteen and the sharp, projecting stone, searching hurriedly, wildly, insanely, for the missing weapon. It lay peacefully oblivious of its owner, brightly reflecting the fierce sunlight, back in the hollow by the body of the horse. But the man did not know this, and he continued the vain search on and on until he was exhausted and fell again, this time from his own lack of strength, sitting down suddenly in the sand, panting, wearied, defeated.

When he rose again and staggered forward the

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canteen was nowhere to be seen. The man did not notice this. He had forgotten the canteen, forgotten everything save the horror of the prospect that he faced. He did not look about him. He walked or rather limped forward, with head lowered and hands limply hanging by his side. The heat was fiercer now than ever before, but the man noticed no change. He seemed always to have been walking in the edge of a great fire, which almost singed him and which made him very thirsty. His mouth was open and the lips were turning back in a fierce simulation of a smile which was not a smile, only the effect of the heat. The lips were dry and cracked and the dryness extended beyond them to the mouth. He felt but one desire, the longing for water. He could not even formulate the idea of this desire in his own mind. There was something somewhere that could stop the burning in the throat and ease the pain of the parching lips. And to this he struggled on.

The man's mind wandered to the life he had made for himself. It was a long time since he had left it all, it must be almost a hundred years now, yes, fully a hundred years, for he had been walking through the fire so long, so long. He remembered faintly, as from an infinite past, some of the things he had done, some of the things he had said, one particular speech he had made at a select gathering of friends, when he had spoken sarcastically of

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the credulous, garrulous world of fools out of which they had risen, fools who made much of a superior Being, whom the select gathering of friends knew as a myth, a kind of hoax. And he remembered a paper he had written, which had been spitefully criticised by this garrulous world of fools, and had marked him as a disbeliever, as they said, an atheist. Also there came into his mind a memory of the woman. Ah—there was the one thing he had regretted. For she was of that world of fools who did not understand. He would not think of her. He had chosen between her and his philosophy. Love! Ah, but that was a weakness as great as the other. And he was strong.

Suddenly the train of thought ceased and faintly he seemed to hear the trickling of water as from a rocky cleft upon a base of stone. He turned in the direction of the sound and attempted to hasten his footsteps, but the trickling came again and louder from the left. Again he turned and again the egging gurgle came from the left. He completed the circle in search of the sound, and then it gurgled fainter and fainter and his straining ear lost the last sound.

Again the sun was drawing to the west. The man kept his eyes on the ground, never raising his head, back bent, shoulders sagging, chin lowered. There was no life or spring to the step, only a labored dragging forward of the feet. A weight

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pressed sharply upon the man's breast, as if a monster hand were pressing, pressing, crushing in the bones. The thirst had almost ceased to vex him now, its acuteness was gone; the man had about forgotten it. All the blood of his body seemed to have risen and filled his head and to be now boiling and bubbling, seeking an exit. The sweat ran unnoted from his forehead, and the dust, stirred by the shambling feet, rose and united with the sweat to form a thin mud which lined and spotted his face gruesomely, like a kind of natural, self-applying war paint.

Dimly a thought struggled in the man's brain. He almost grasped it, when it slipped away, only to return again and again, until at last it came full-fledged before him. It was the thought of the end of it all. He put his hand to the trousers pocket, then slowly, almost indifferently continued the search through the remaining pockets of his clothing. Then he remembered having done this before. He started on again mechanically, but the thought started too and kept itself before his mind's eye, and nagged him, and worried him, and frightened him. Actually frightened him, this thought of death, of the passing from the vital to some other state. He remembered having argued once that there was no other state, that past vitality was nonentity. He thought now of the probability of another existence. Of course there could be none; but why

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then did he go on through the fire? The end would be the same finally; why this effort? He thought he would stop and—but the weapon was gone now; death must come to him through thirst, the burning, the fever, the weakness. And even had he still the weapon, he wondered, could he voluntarily pass into a state of nothingness? Or could he face death, could he sit down and wait for it without a struggle? The human in him shrank, as ever weak humanity must shrink before the face of the decrees of God. He could not die; and so he struggled on.

The man's progress was growing slower, every hour the effort became feebler and more labored. He dragged one foot after the other, each step raising a puff of white dust, until his trail was marked a hundred yards behind by a light cloud. His head was far over now and his mouth was open all the time. He breathed sharply and fitfully, and his arms hung dangling at his side, every muscle relaxed, the fingers apart.

The afternoon passed, the sun sinking slowly to the west, as if loath to leave its victim the short respite of night. But the man kept on after the sun had set, through the long twilight, knowing nothing, caring nothing, performing, as a piece of mechanism, his appointed task of moving, moving on. Each step grew feebler, each foot of sand drew itself out longer before him; his breathing

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was painful now and his legs trembled and wobbled under him, until at last they separated and would not come together again. He did not fall forward. His legs gave way beneath him and he sank easily upon the sand in a huddled heap and lay there in a stupor.

When the man awoke his mind was clearer, but he was weak, so weak that he simply opened his eyes without changing his position, and looked into the face of the moon which stood directly above him and seemed to be watching over him in silent vigil as he slept. The whole heavens lay stretched before him as he lay face upward in the night. To the left Orion's belt of brilliants burned and danced in one straight, never-varying line, and out beyond the Scorpion curled his jeweled tail in arrogance. The Milky Way marked its brilliant corridor across the face of heaven, and low upon the horizon Jupiter was passing lesser luminaries grandly in his descent. And thrown in glittering chaos upon the black, enclosing mantle of the night, the million million stars sparkled and danced and disappeared and flashed back again in brilliance, varying in color, bewildering in number, delighting in their remoteness and the mysteries they made.

Upon the earth rested the peace and serenity of glorious, soundless night. The silence pressed upon the man, now that his brain was working again to some extent, and made him restless, fear-

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ful. He seemed to have awakened in the midst of a long-dead world, a burnt-out planet, whereon the other bodies of the universe looked in sympathy and sadness. A star flashed suddenly full across the face of heaven, leaving behind a glowing trail of fire that burned a golden thread across the black and faded, faded back again to night. Not a breath stirred upon the land, not a sound broke the stillness of the midnight hour. It was a glorious, awesome, magnificent, grandly silent spectacle; yet over all there was a grand and stately order. The bigness of it, the mystery of it, the profound complexity of it all, awed the man, and he felt at once the insignificance of his own small self amid these monuments of ages gone and yet to be.

The man lay in rapt awe, gazing wide-eyed upon the handiwork of the One he had denied, had scoffed at and forsworn. The presumption of his life upon the earth came to him now in its full horror, and he shivered at the thought. Weakly, tremulously he raised his arms in silent worship, not blindly, but knowingly, as one who has been walking in the darkness and comes forth into the light. Deep from out his blasted soul came the cry to Godhead, stifled yet struggling forth, the cry of the generations of his kind, of the dream shapes and phantom forms who had worshiped before him, squatting on their haunches down

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through the dim vista of the centuries, crying out to the Unseen that is Power.

So passed the night. At dawn the man turned painfully upon his face, and more painfully lifted himself by slow degrees to his feet. Even then he staggered and fell back. Again he tried it, and the strength came back to him enough for him to keep his legs. He started forward, tottering, staggering, falling. But each time he gained his feet again. The strength of a new purpose urged him now. He would get back, he must get back, and undo the deeds of those dark, unseeing years. Fools! Ah, he had been the greatest. And he would find Her again, and mend the broken home, and mend the broken heart, for she had loved him with all his great folly.

Presently his foot caught and he fell again, heavily. The fall stunned him slightly and he lay stretched with hands far extended. As his senses returned he became conscious that his left hand grasped something that was not sand. He pulled himself forward and examined it curiously. It was a tuft of dry grass, dead, parched, brittle in his hand. But it was grass and it was rooted, for, though the blades were broken in his grasp, the stubble left held firmly. The man scrambled awkwardly and painfully to his feet. To his right a few yards was another tuft, and directly to his

front another still. His progress was faster now, though more painful and with more frequent falls. The heat was growing intense, but the grass tufts gained frequency as he advanced.

His foot kicked something in the dust that glistened in the glare of the sun. He stooped and picked it up, turning it over carefully. It was the metal shell of a Winchester cartridge, of a late manufacture, such as he had brought with him to the West. He remembered that it was of a lighter design than those used by the cowboys, and that they had never seen any like it before. A little further on he found a deep impression where a horse had stumbled. He remembered that his cayuse had almost fallen as he dashed wildly in pursuit of the fleeing antelope. Another bright speck; another shell of the same mold as the first.

His brain was reeling again in mad orgy. The thirst was not troubling him now, but the weakness was gaining. His progress was slackening, his falling more and more frequent. His vision was clouded by a mist that swam before him, sometimes close, sometimes receding far away, but ever returning. It receded now and he saw a cloud, as of dust, on the horizon. The dust cloud advanced, grew. Then the mist closed in again and shut it from his view. He staggered on weakly, like a drunken man. It was a paradoxical similitude,

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this stagger of the man who had naught to drink to one who has drunk too freely. He fell now every few steps, and his forward movement resolved itself into crawling. But he kept at it, even after he could not get his legs again, crawling painfully, dragging himself on all fours, toward the vision of the dust cloud. Even the crawling grew too much for him. He rested frequently, crawling a few yards, then lying still, then crawling on again. He had advanced but a foot the last time and had stopped utterly exhausted. He was feebly clutching at the ground with his hands to pull himself forward again, when the dust cloud was upon him, and two men sprang from their saddles and knelt above him.

"Water!" His parched lips formed the word, though no sound came from the blistered throat. One of the men put a canteen to his lips, and he made no effort to swallow, letting the liquid find its unimpeded way down his throat. Then he sank back.

When the man awoke he was in bed in his own room at the ranch house. He lay looking at the ceiling for a long time. Outside all was quiet. The men were away at this hour. His meditation was undisturbed. Beside him, upon a chair, was a glass of water. The sight of it made him thirsty, and he made to reach it. He was surprised at the

weakness that was on him. He lay back wearily and regarded the ceiling again, listlessly. The ceiling was quite rough, being composed of unsmoothed boards nailed across the rafters, with great cracks here and there. Also it was black with dirt, and clogged with cobwebs. But the man did not notice this. He could not have said whether the room was ceiled at all.

He lay very still, with a sheet drawn over him and his arms extended out, leaving his shoulders uncovered. A great weariness was on him; every muscle was resting. He was very comfortable. It was good not to feel compelled to move—with nothing to do but think.

The man's eyes closed, but he was not asleep. He was wondering at the simplicity of it all, the beautiful simplicity of the thing that he had set himself against, of the thing that he had learned. He understood how She had felt now, and even in his great weariness he flushed at the thought of his folly, that folly which had meant so little and had cost so dear.

He remembered the day when he had courted her in the old Virginia village, with the mountain thrusting its shoulder into the sky toward the west, and the old dust road following its aimless meanderings between the wheat fields. They were loitering along the same old road, the boy and girl,

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and the shadows were creeping over the world, for the sun had already sunk behind the mountain. He remembered how she had looked that day, and to his imaginative nostrils came again the faint perfume of the apple blossoms she had carried in her hand. He had loved her and had told her, and she had loved him too.

He had begun the trouble by seeking to reconstruct the whole fabric of humanity, to tear down the oldest barrier between humanity and bestiality. For he had declared against religion, which began in Eden, and from which came love. He could not deny love. That was his first inconsistency. Then he had kept on and on, until he believed this poor complexity of doubtings to be philosophy.

Now he knew it was not philosophy, but bigotry.

And then the boy had died. That had startled him, had grieved him, for he loved the boy very dearly. He remembered the night the boy had died, with his mother sitting dry-eyed by, holding the cold hand and pressing it tightly between her two. The man had wondered. Her silent grief had awed him, frightened him. He knew this was the kind of grief that kills. Then he had come and led her away, and had made the great mistake. For he thought to comfort her with his philosophy of non-existence beyond the flesh. He had told her that the boy was better off, that he had escaped

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the hardships of the world and its sorrows—and that now he was gone back again into the nothingness whence he came. But the woman had cried out in horror, and flung off his arm, and her cheeks were crimson as she almost shrieked:

“Is nothing sacred to you? Oh, how can you, how can you?”

And then had come the tears and she had rushed away from him. He had not seen her since that night.

The man opened his eyes again and saw the rough ceiling above him. What a fool he had been! How near had he come to wrecking forever a life. He moved restlessly. A heavy step sounded in the hall and one of the men entered.

“Want anything, sir?” he asked. Then he saw the glass of water and handed it to the man in bed.

“Yer was purty nigh all in when we sighted yer, sir. Purty nigh all in.”

“Yes,” said the man in bed. Then he raised himself ever so slightly. “I would like to send a telegram. Can you take it?”

“Well, there ain’t none here but me ter wait on yer, sir. But if yer kin sorter git along tell the boys come in, I guess I kin ride over to Spivey Junction an’ git the agent ter send er fer ye. It’s a purty good ride, but I kin make it back here by midnight, I reckon.”

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The man in the bed told the other where to find paper and pencil. Then he wrote, slowly, weakly, laboredly. And the message that he sent was this:

“I have seen that which no man could show me. I return soon.”

It was directed to his wife. And in the great peace that lay upon him, he knew that she would forgive.

SILENT McTASH ¹

By WESTMORELAND GRAY

THERE was something monotonous about the extreme dependability and regularity with which Sandy McTash performed his duty. Every Wednesday and Saturday between ten and eleven o'clock his stage-coach rolled into Salodura and he reported with his characteristic brevity to the stage agent, who was also the postmaster. His horses were never excessively lathered nor exhausted, and Sandy himself, aside from the dust of the trail, showed but few signs of the gruelling all night ride over the Devil's Edge trail from Sunburst, the relay point.

For three years it had been thus. Month in and month out, in spite of blizzards, sandstorm or devastating summer heat. And every two weeks he brought the two-thousand-dollar packet of currency for the Good Friday mine payroll.

Prior to Sandy's time, a driver on the Devil's Edge trail would seldom last over three or four

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months—six months at best. If the silence and stark wildness of that trail didn't get him, the road agents would. The lure of the two thousand, the certainty with which it must go through every other week, drew holdup men like a magnet, and a hundred places along the trail were made-to-order settings for successful holdups. The ease with which previous drivers had been separated from the precious packets had become a thorn in the side of the stage company, insurance company, and the mine owners.

And then came Sandy. Dour, taciturn, and as uncommunicative as a gate post, his sorrel whiskers and hair grizzled and streaked with gray, his blue eyes a little faded, the plaid of his mackinaw brown with stain of weather and wear—Sandy was then an unknown quantity. But he soon proved himself.

He carried a holstered six-gun, and rode with a carbine on the footboard in reach of his horny hand. And he knew how to use either one.

Thrice the road agents had tried their luck—that was enough. The first one had staggered away from the scene, fearfully wounded, to wander off into oblivion; the second had died with a single shot from Sandy's six-gun and Sandy himself had buried the man with his boots on, out there where the wolves howled; the third man had been brought to Salodura, slightly wounded, hands bound behind him, slumped over in the seat beside Sandy. The

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old man turned him over to the Salodura deputy sheriff with about as much ceremony and ado as he'd use in borrowing a match.

"Rub the off wheel hoss off a wee bit extry, laddie," he said to the hostler who ran out to receive the team. "An' go light on his feed, 'cause I think his wind ain't been so good. An' here's a man for you, deputy," he added, dragging his captive down from the seat.

No one knew the hows or wherefores of the unsuccessful holdups, for the unhappy bandits had been the only other witnesses, and Sandy never commented on the affairs himself.

Of course, he was Scotch, you'd soon know that without knowing his name. Somebody else usually paid for what few drinks he drank at the Salodura saloon. And when he played "a wee bit" poker, he played carefully, for small stakes, and invariably won. He saved his money; he still wore the plaid mackinaw in which he'd first reported for duty three years before. No one in Salodura knew where he kept his little hoarded savings, nor what he intended doing with them, for on these, as well as all the other mysteries of sun and earth, Sandy McTash was silent.

"Yep," announced Curley Bannon, a dark, wavy haired young cowboy, with wild and reckless rove in his eye. "Yep, I reckon I'm shakin' the dust o'

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these here parts from my boots. Day an' night I've rid herd around here, busted salty brones, slept out in the rain, sleet and blizzards, an' et hard grub—an' it ain't got me nowheres so far as I can see. All I see is drouth, an' starvation, an' black-leg. Cattle dyin' o' thirst in the summer' an' freezin' in the blizzards in winter. If'n this here's God's country, reckon I'll take sides with the devil for a spell."

Curley announced this to all and sundry, in the Salodura saloon, clumping to the bar and looking about him.

"Come on, gents," he invited. "This is on Curley. Just a little farewell toot. I just been paid off by the T Bar an' I reckon they's enough for a drink around. All what's left goes to buy all the distance I can get at bargain rates for me an' my horse Caesar."

There were about ten men in the saloon—four or five about a poker table, the others lounging around. They responded willingly to Curley's urge.

"Come on, Sandy McTash," Curley called. "This here won't cost yuh a damn' cent. Yuh oughter enjoy it, I reckon. It's on Curley."

Sandy rose and came to the bar.

"Reckon I could stand a wee drink, Curley," he said.

Thus had Curley Bannon advertised the fact that he was quitting Salodura for keeps. His dis-

appearance, then, would not only be a natural and logical thing—it would be expected.

As a matter of fact, Curley had been fired by the T Bar outfit. He had been fired by the Circle A before that, and the Crooked S before that. For he had not the faculty nor desire to get along with his employers. And his bunk mates had not liked him, because he was a trouble maker and was suspected of cheating at cards.

Curley rode jauntily out of Salodura the next morning at eight o'clock, on his pinto, Caesar, with his small pack strapped behind. The stable boy, the postmaster and various other nondescript citizenry saw him leave, and answered his waved farewell.

It would be three days before Sandy McTash would drive through from Sunburst, over the Devil's Edge trail, bringing the two-thousand-dollar packet of currency for the Good Friday mine. Curley was leaving the country all right, but he intended carrying that packet with him.

He had laid his plans well, so that no suspicion would be attached to his disappearance. In his pack was a suit of old, rough black clothes, and a mask made of black cloth with holes cut in it for his eyes.

As Sandy's old Concord stage stood ready in front of the Sunburst station, fresh horses stamping and eager to be off, the old station-master,

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Tottendale, came out grinning. It was still two hours until sundown.

"No passengers today, Sandy," the station-master boomed. "Le's damp our whistles with a little dram before yuh start. 'S on me."

Since it entailed no expense on his part, Sandy was willing. He left the horses to the hostler boy while he and Tottendale clumped into the saloon next door and drank each a small, gentleman's drink of Scotch. Sandy thanked the station-master.

"Well, I must reelly be a-going," he said. "Have ye got the Gude Friday packet?"

The station-master went to the small safe in the pine office and drew out the packet, a thick package of currency, tied with tape.

He handed it to Sandy with a grin.

"This here makes yore seventy-seventh trip, Sandy, with the money. Seventy-six trips without a falter. Here's wishin' you luck on this 'un."

This was the station-master's custom. Always to remind Sandy of the number of the trip, and bid him "bon voyage." Tottendale was as big of heart as he was of frame.

Sandy tucked the money in his shirt, under his woolen undershirt, next the skin. His faded blue eyes were expressionless as he thanked the station-master again and climbed wirily to the seat on the coach.

He caught up the reins, released the brake, and

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clucked to the ready horses. With *clop* of hoof and creak of wheel, the old stage-coach whirled away, leaving a haze of dust in its wake.

Tottendale looked after old Sandy, with something akin to mist in his eyes, for the true blue loyalty of the little man, his fine devotion to duty, was touching. It always made the big man's heart well up in him to see Sandy ride away into the sunset.

And, too, the station-master knew a little more of Sandy's secret than the rest of the world. He knew that Sandy's religious, penny-pinching saving was founded on something finer than just his canny Scotch thrift. The station-master alone had been Sandy's confidant.

"Back in Scotland," Sandy had told him, "I have my daughter—only one. A bonnie lass, she. And 'twas years ago her man died, leaving her with two wee children. I save for her, Tottendale, to bring her and her two little ones from the auld country, and make life easier for them here."

Sandy had broken his silence on this one occasion, under the spell of several drinks bought by Tottendale.

When the little Scotch driver had made the last curve, and the trail of dust was the only sign of his going, Tottendale turned with a grunt toward his office.

"I'm a maudlin old fool, I reckon," he said sheep-

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ishly, ashamed of the dampness in his eyes, "standin' out here gettin' sentimental over that shrewd little bundle o' human wires."

Slowly the great red ball of the sun sank, apparently in the middle of the trail which Sandy followed. Night came on with its desert chill, the horses struck up a fresh clip.

The pungent tang of greasewood and sage mingled with the dust the whirling wheels stirred up from the trail. The tang came from the scrubby brush which spotted the sandy, almost treeless wastes to the north of the trail. Heavy stark boulders guarded the trail on Sandy's left, the south side. Sheer jagged cliffs, tortured and jumbled, fell away from the trail in that direction. Ahead the trail wound, ever uncertain and precarious, between steep cliffs and sharp boulders, through chaparral and sage and ocatillo, along precipice edge—on and on and ever wilder. But to Sandy it was all an old story. He knew every rock and crevice, every bush and scrubby tree, every dip and rise. The trail itself held no terror for him.

A cold white half moon rose over Sandy's right shoulder. It made the shadows sharp and black. The shadows of the horses and stage fell before them, long and grotesque in twisting, tortured movement. Occasional piñon along the trail stood out, spectral, sentinel-like. Trembling cedars,

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stirred by the faintest of breeze, took on queerly exaggerated shapes.

These things had their effect more on the horses than on the stoic, imperturbable Scot. They made the animals' nerves taut and high-strung, made them tighten the traces and speed on to quit that land as quickly as they could.

But there was something else in the night, this night, which was gradually getting under the little Scotchman's skin. Wild animals and dangerous trails—these were his daily work. But human animals, vultures that preyed on such trails, those were what lurked now in the back of Sandy's mind. Why was it he feared road agents tonight, more than any other night? Was this a premonition? Was he losing his nerve?

Sandy felt the butt of his revolver to reassure himself. He bent over and picked up the carbine on the footboard beneath him. Holding the reins with his left hand he held the gun in his right and examined it carefully. With a silent chuckle of satisfaction he laid it down—very handy.

He was nearing a gulch, into which the trail would lead, running along its bed. Even now he could see the yawning blackness of its mouth. And this was the one spot he dreaded. Once in those shadows, cliffs rose like walls on both sides of the trail, cliffs pitted with crevices, holes, caverns and

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jagged shelves—every one nature's fittest hiding place for a highwayman.

Sandy's wiry little body tensed like a tightly wound steel spring. His pale blue eyes closed almost to slits as he peered steadily ahead in the night. A nameless fear seemed to grip him. As he approached the gulch, he lashed his horses to a high gallop and went thundering between those darkened walls with a crescendo of rattle, creak and bang.

He shouted and stood up on his board. The old Concord rocked and reeled crazily, and the echo of his passage made the night hideous.

This way, that way Sandy peered, striving to pierce the gloom. Every dark shadow that might hide a bandit, he gave close but flying scrutiny. The horses sensed his mood. His excitement was contagious. Nostrils distended, round eyes gleaming, they galloped through the canyon, steel shoes ringing and striking fire.

Now they could see the exit. The gray spot of light at the canyon's westward mouth beckoned like a saving beacon.

One last shout Sandy gave, one last lash of the whip and they were through. Sheer walls fell away on each side, gray moonlight spilled about them. The trail led out on the sandy flat, and the shrub-flecked desert reached away.

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Sandy sat back on the reins, drew the horses down to a canter, a trot, a jog. He wrapped his lines about the brake handle, quieted the animals by coaxing, then sank into his seat in relief.

When the reaction came, however, Sandy was thoroughly ashamed of himself. It was the only real case of nerves he had ever had in all his three years over that night trail. Suppose he *had* met a bandit—hadn't he met them before?

Now would come miles across the open space, a neck of desert. Nothing out here to make such convenient hiding places for bandits, for here a man could see around him.

Reaction from his excited drive came over Sandy, his wiry nerves were tired. With his sense of security on the open trail, a sort of lassitude stole over him. After all, Sandy wasn't so young. He rested, almost dozed, as the horses moved along in an easy jog.

He gave scant notice to the terrain about. He passed without seeing a small piñon right against the trail. The tree was but little larger than a human body, but it cast a black shadow.

When the stage coach eased creaking by, the figure of a man parted from the shadowy tree, ran silently a few steps behind the vehicle, reached up and caught a small crossbar and swung up back of the cab.

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The figure rode thus a minute or two, then climbed up and flattened out on his belly, like a lizard, atop the slightly swaying coach. Slowly he wriggled forward.

Sandy lit his pipe, after cramming it frugally with rough-cut tobacco, slapped the reins over the horses' rumps and fell into peaceful meditation. He'd not let his nerves play him false again.

Then he felt a cold ring of steel pressed against the back of his neck—so cold that it seemed to chill his heart, which skipped a beat.

"Put 'em up!" rasped a low, hard voice. Sandy's move for his gun was intuitive. But quick, renewed pressure of that revolver against the flesh of his bare neck arrested the move.

"Put 'em up, Pop—or I'll put this slug right through yore Adam's apple!"

The voice carried a threat that Sandy could not ignore. Slowly, for it racked his soul with pain to do so, he elevated his hands.

"I ain't wantin' to kill yuh, Pop," the voice behind the ring of steel said. "But I shore will if yuh try to act funny. Just sit right still and 'whoa' the hosses."

Sandy croaked it hoarsely—"Whoa!"

A hand shot by his side and yanked his revolver from its holster, then drew back the brake handle. The coach drew to a stop, sliding its wheels in the sand.

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Again the pistol nudged his neck.

"Jump down, Pop. Keep yore hands up—an' turn this way, standin' still."

The last vestige of hope went glimmering when Sandy jumped to the ground. He had to leave his rifle on the footboard. The bandit jerked it up and he, too, leaped to the ground.

"Where's the money?"

"I dinna know what ye mean, man."

A harsh guffaw. The bandit shifted his revolver to his left hand, reached back with his right and leaned the rifle against a coach wheel. He was masked. A black cloth covered his face, with holes for his eyes; and he was dressed in black, rough clothes.

He snatched Sandy's mackinaw open, sending several buttons spinning through the air. He jerked open the old man's shirt—still with the revolver leveled on Sandy—dug under the old undershirt and fished out the packet. His hand might have felt something else there if he hadn't been so anxious for the packet.

With his eyes on Sandy, as well as his gun, he placed the packet between his teeth and ripped its tapes loose. He broke the heavy wrapper, and drew out the fluttery pad of bills.

A hoarse, greedy chuckle escaped him as he stowed the bills away in his own shirt bosom.

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"Thanks, Pop! This here's the dough, all right."

He jerked up the carbine and backed away.

"If yuh move or let yore hands down before I get outta sight, I'll plug yuh dead," he said, his voice now almost in a conversational tone. "Yuh'll find yore six-gun an' carbine in the trail ahead if yuh look for 'em. They're too heavy for me to tote around."

He backed away, receding in the gloom, the carbine aimed at Sandy as far as the old man could see.

Finally the highwayman was gone. Sandy stooped sadly, picked up the empty packet and stared at it.

Curley Bannon, when he had left Sandy's rifle and revolver in the trail, ran quickly through the night, away from the trail, the coach and the old man he had robbed. A quarter mile from the trail was a steep-sided defile.

Curley had fastened a rope at its edge. He grasped the rope and went over, sliding down to the bottom of the cut. His horse was tethered there. The man jerked the mask from his face and mounted. He rode down the defile a hundred yards to where there was a break in its bank. He rode up the break to level ground and cut through a section of chaparral and sparse timber. When he came out of this he headed westward toward a trail

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that would take him to the nearest railway station. A week later he hit the border towns with their flesh pots. He had two thousand dollars and he blazed a trail.

When he ran out of money, the mask and the gun again came in handy. A faro dump netted him a thousand. This went the way of his first haul.

Again he plied his trade. A little bank job this time. He had to kill the cashier, but he got nearly two thousand dollars.

Six months passed from the time Curley had taken that first two thousand from old Sandy McTash. He thought of that easy money going over that wild trail every two weeks. And then there was a girl he'd liked in the dance hall across from the Salodura saloon. Curley turned his steps toward his original haunts.

Each of his jobs had been as carefully planned and executed as the first. He had left no trace behind him, no one suspected him in either case. He walked among men and was known as a care-free, easy-going man of means.

He returned to Sunburst, caught old Sandy's stage. There was no flicker of suspicion in the Scotchman's pale eyes as he greeted the returned cowboy, and the latter bought him a drink at the Sunburst saloon. Curley had already learned that the money would not go through until Saturday.

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On the ride to Salodura Curley sat beside Sandy on the driver's seat. He engaged the old man in desultory conversation, and Sandy spoke only in his usual monosyllabic manner. If anything, he was more silent, more dour than when Curley knew him before. He was also more weather-beaten, more faded, and a little more grizzled than before.

They rode into Salodura the next morning at a little after ten o'clock. Curley was greeted cordially by the old-timers—the saloon-keeper, the stage-agent, the livery-man and others. They all seemed glad enough to see him. There was no sign of suspicion anywhere.

He looked prosperous, but there was a new hardness about him; a grim twist to his mouth, a crafty glint in his eyes, more roving, more dare-devil than had the T Bar puncher the men of Salodura had known.

Curley spent the day among acquaintances easily enough. He saw the girl at the dance hall and spread the news about that he had been lucky at faro down on the border. No one spoke of the stage-coach robbery, and Curley, of course, refrained from mentioning it.

However, along toward night, Curley began to get curious. What did the natives think of the holdup? Had there been any suspects, he won-

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dered. How had they received the news when old Sandy had ridden in without the money, the first time in seventy-seven trips? What did the stage company think of their infallible driver, Sandy?

The dare-devil glint in Curley's eyes was not there for nothing. He would find out these things. And from old Sandy, the very man he had robbed, too. Curley smiled. That was the sort of reckless thing he enjoyed.

That night, in the saloon, Curley drew Sandy aside at one end of the bar. He bought the Scotchman a drink and opened conversation, asking about some of the T Bar boys, about the prosperity of the country, and about the Good Friday mine. He bought another drink. He bought several.

Sandy responded to all of Curley's generosity and questions briefly, but in a friendly enough manner.

Finally Curley asked, "By the by, Sandy, did they ever catch that there bandit what held yuh up on the Sunburst trail an' took the Good Friday money offa yuh?"

Sandy's blue eyes flickered. He slowly took the whisky glass from his lips.

"Nay," he answered in his quiet voice. "He's never been caught, Curley."

"'S too bad, old-timer. That there's one time yuh wuz had where the wool was short, ain't it?"

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Curley laughed shortly, in good natured derision. Sandy moved quietly a little down the bar.

"Aye, lad."

"Huh. So he got away hair-an'-hide, huh? What's folk think hereabout?"

"Just stand where ye are, lad, and hist ye hands," Sandy said, coolly in answer.

Curley bristled, startled, made an involuntary move, then froze still. For he saw that Sandy's revolver was in his hand, leveled on Curley's thumping heart.

"Ye hands, me lad, up high!"

Attention from all over the saloon was now on the tableau at the bar. Games ceased, hands were arrested with drinks halfway to lips, the barkeep ceased rubbing the bar, and all eyes turned on Curley and Sandy.

"Call the deputy, Laudanum, me auld friend," Sandy said to the bartender. "I ha' here a stage-bandit for him."

Curley's wild eyes flashed about the saloon, then blazed at Sandy. He took half a step toward the old man, but stopped, gazing at the menacing gun.

"Yuh old fool!" he snarled. "What d'yuh mean? I ain't no bandit. I'll make yuh sorry for this——"

"Hist, man, save ye words. Here comes the deputy. Mr. Deputy, here's a bandit that robbed me, six months ago o' the Good Friday payroll."

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The deputy, just entered, stared from Curley to Sandy and then back again. Was this a joke? No. Sandy was in earnest. He meant every word he said—as he always did.

“Will ye please handcuff him?”

The deputy snapped the steel cuffs on Curley. The erstwhile T Bar puncher fumed, swore, and threatened Sandy; he worked himself into a frenzy, wildly denying everything and berating Sandy for a lunatic. The deputy stood questioningly by. Finally Curley, almost exhausted, broke down.

As they led him out the door for the little one-cell jail, Curley turned to Sandy.

“I had that there job all covered up,” he snarled. “How in hell did yuh know I done it?”

“Hist, lad, ye gave yeself away when ye spoke of it. I ne’er told a soul about the robbery. I dinna want it against me record. I filled the packet with currency from me own money belt, and delivered it in good order!”

The next day they carried Curley, the bandit who had betrayed himself, to Sunburst and then on to the county seat.

The following week when Sandy drove into Sunburst and reported to Tottendale, the big, kindly station-master was all smiles.

“You old fox,” the station-master finally choked out. “Well, you win after all, Sandy. The

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deputy told me Curley'd confessed to a bank robbery, where he killed the cashier. They's a twenty-five-hundred dollar reward for 'im on that. Whoopee, man! Come on an' let's take a drink!"

The station-master paid for the drink.

OLE MISTIS¹

By BARRY BENEFIELD

THAT year I was clerk, bookkeeper, and assistant postmaster in Arkadelphia, which is Simon Stettler's general store, on the white sandy road, fifteen miles from Minden, in the cotton country of East Texas. It was a boll-weevil year, and by Christmas a constable was going about foreclosing the mortgages held by Mr. Stettler on land and live stock, belonging chiefly to negroes, who in the South are often as much the slaves of impersonal legal documents and ruthless legal machinery as ever they were of white masters.

One day in January I heard the constable reporting to Mr. Stettler that he had been to Jeff Morrow's place to get his gray mare. The old negro had said she was out in the field, and promised to ride her over to the store for surrender the next day. "We'll see," said the merchant, turning to other business.

After dark the next day the aged little albino slipped through the door, as if he hoped he would

¹From *Short Turns*, by Barry Benefield, the Century Company, publishers. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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not be seen. Mr. Stettler having gone away to Minden to attend court, I was alone in the management of the store; and as there were several people showing an active disposition to buy, I paid no direct attention to the new-comer except to speak.

He walked to the lower end of the counter and stood leaning against it, alternately crushing and smoothing out his dingy brown felt hat, his pinky-white eyes watching me fearfully. Once or twice it happened that he was in my way; when he discovered it he leaped scufflingly aside, with an exclamation of piteous apology. After a while the lamp-lit store was clear of all but myself and the little negro, in whom freakish nature had wrought the curious variations from type characteristic of the albino. His wrinkled milky-white cheeks were ghastly where the points peeped through his frizzly pale-gold beard.

"Well, Jeff, what can I do for you?" I asked, having forgotten for the moment about his mortgage. Out of the frame made by his conjoined beard and hair his eyes were straining vainly to read some hope into my face.

He moved down the counter until he was opposite me. Leaning over it, and trying desperately to accomplish the negro's customary smile of placating amiability, he whispered, "I brung Ole Mistis oveh"; and then I remembered. I turned

quickly to look at a row of tomato-cans on the shelf behind me. He went on in his habitual hoarse half-whisper:

"Yassuh, I told de constable I would. You know, I mortgaged her, de Lawd he'p me, an' you knows whut de boll-weevil done to we all in de summer jes' gone by. Season befo' dat I mortgaged my ten acres to Mr. Jamison, in Minden, an' now I ain' nuffin but a renter on my own lan'. Dis pas' season I stakes Ole Mistis, 'cause she wuz de onliest thing 'at would stan' even a little bittie mortgage—well, suh, ne'min' all dat; Mr. Stettler 'vanced me sixty dollars in supplies, bad luck come, Ole Mistis tied outside to a pos'. She ain' mine now, is she?"

To evade his question, which I hadn't the heart to answer, I faced around and asked him one.

"Why did you give her that name?"

At this, through the bramble of pale-gold beard, the small face shone with swift radiance. "'Cause she bosses me so, an' meekin' no noise at all about hit. Jes' a word er a look f'om her, an', suh, I cain' no mo' he'p doin' whut she wants, no more'n I could fer ole Mistis Marlowe afore she died. An' so I named her when she wuz a colt."

"How many in your family?"

"On'y me an'—on'y me now. My ole 'oman, she dead an' buried long time ago; de chillern, all boys, done gone away de Lawd on'y knows whar;

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an' I spec he lose track on 'em now an' den. Yas-suh, I'm de onliest one—now. I ain' never counted my coon houn' an' de chickens an' de hawgs in de fambly. But Ole Mistis, she wuz in it; lately she wuz mos' of it."

The light had died out of his face, and he was again crushing and straightening out his felt hat. I wanted to say something, to do something; there was nothing to say, nothing to do.

"Well, suh, I reckon I better be ramblin' on back home. Hit's a mile oveh in de piney woods. I'll be tellin' you good evenin' now. Hit's right smart col' dis winter, ain't it? Good evenin' to you, suh."

"Evening, Jeff."

Smiling in valiant amiability, he opened the door, slipped through, closed it behind him softly. I heard his steps leave the porch and sound gratefully once or twice on the gravelly ground in front of it. I worked on in the store an hour longer, posting the books and tying up some mail for the next day's rider; and when I had closed up, locking the rear door last, I walked around the long frame building to lead the old gray mare back to the stable. As I turned the corner I saw a figure separate itself from the horse and stumble off into the darkness. Ole Mistis whinnied in soft appeal.

Upon his return from Minden, after several days, I told Mr. Stettler in some detail how the gray mare had been surrendered.

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"Yes," he answered. "We'll feed her up this month and next; somebody will be wanting to buy her when planting-time comes. She's eight years old now, but there's five or six years of good work in her yet. Old Jeff always treated her well."

It was easy for me to understand the merchant's hardness. Fifteen years before, I knew by report, he had come walking through the country with a small stock of dry goods in an oilskin pack on his back, which still showed in its stoop the trade-mark of his early days. Then he had been treated with scant respect by even the negroes. If this had affected him, I was sure he had not revealed it; and after five years, having built the store and started in business on a larger scale, he had transacted his affairs with the same imperturbable fateful calmness as in the days of the oilskin pack. The machinery of business had pulled Ole Mistis away from her aged master and servitor; in the beginning Simon Stettler had let nothing interfere with that machinery, nor did it seem likely that he would now.

Once or twice a week after that, Jeff came to the store to buy a nickel's worth of sugar or a dime's worth of coffee. It was his custom to come early in the afternoon, and having made his purchase to slip around to the ample stableyard, where the gray mare with other mortgage prisoners strolled

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at their ease. I often watched him rubbing her nose through the fence and talking to her. I grew to be very much interested in this captive, whose coat was uniformly flecked with little black spots—dingy ermine robe of a fallen queen.

Before the end of February the sap was rising in the ground, and the peach-trees were in pale-pink blossom. The farmers were making leisurely preparations for another season's crops. Fences were being repaired, gardens planted, mortgages signed.

About this time Jeff told me in the store one day that Mr. Jamison, who now owned his ten acres of thin gravelly land, had refused to let him have it another year unless he could get a horse from somebody else. The Minden merchant, he went on, was trying to rent the farm.

"An' I may be movin' in a week or so," he stated.

"Where to?" I asked.

"Maybe somebody'll hieh me to meck a crap on dee fahm," he said hopefully, and started slowly out. I looked after the bent fragile figure; it was not pleasant to think of his hopes.

Mr. Stettler did not think it was good business to let Jeff have a horse and supplies for another season. Then I heard that he had been dispossessed to make room for a tenant family that had rented his old farm and another adjoining it. He moved his hound and his chickens, his cooking

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utensils, and his planting tools, to a ruined cabin in an unfenced fallow field, thickly dotted with stunted second-growth pine saplings, the property of an estate tied up in a court fight.

Now things were beginning to advance rapidly in the country. The atmosphere of ease and leisure was changing to one of energy, even of excitement. Corn was in the ground. Everybody was asking everybody else how many acres they were holding for cotton, how many for the smaller diversified crops, what they proposed to do about the boll-weevil, whether this or that new kind of cotton-seed had proved successful, and whether there were any readable and reliable signs in moon and stars and almanacs indicating a good crop season. Often, in the store, I saw the homeless despairing little negro, standing humbly at the outermost edge of a group of eager thrilling crop gamblers, listening, listening, listening, saying nothing.

On a day in April—I think it was April, for I remember the atmosphere in the country was at its tensest with large new hopes—Mr. Stettler asked me not to make any dates for that night.

One half of the second floor of the store he had fitted up as his home, to which a negro woman came three times a day to cook his meals and in which I lived with him. The gigantic dining-room was in the rear, its two windows looking out on a short stretch of open ground shaded with oak-trees,

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beyond which was the big stable-yard, with the barn in the middle of it. Several times as we ate supper I noticed Mr. Stettler turning his eyes to the windows; through them nothing was to be seen in the softly dark, vaporous spring night outside, so that I knew his eyes were unwittingly pointing the direction of his thoughts.

After supper he lit his pipe and sat down in a deep chair by one of the rear windows, but he did not put on his carpet-slippers, so that I knew we were going out. When the cook had washed the dishes and gone away, he said, still staring out the window and scratching thoughtfully at the patches of red-gray beard on his thin cheeks:

"Well, somebody is trying to steal our horses."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I noticed this morning that the padlock on the stable door was all scarred up. Somebody had been trying to break the lock or to pull out the staple that holds it. He must have been interfered with; for if he had tried long enough he could have got in; I know I could. When I saw the lock this morning I remembered that I had heard the dog barking in the middle of the night. But he stopped all at once, as if he had recognized somebody; you know how a dog's fierceness collapses when an unfearing familiar hand pats him on the head. And then I guess whoever it was decided to come again and silence the dog first."

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"What are you going to do about it? That's why you wanted me to stay in to-night?"

"Yes," he said, standing up. "I have pulled the staple almost out of the door-post; it will be no trouble to get at the horses to-night. And I have tied up the dog. I judged, from the tracks in the dew-crusted sand around the door this morning, that there was but one man in the business. Whoever it is, if he comes, I want him to get into the stable and start out; then we'll grab him. You understand: I want to get this fellow *after* he has taken a horse out of the stable. That will finish him and end the worry of suspense."

He walked into his bedroom and came back in a few minutes dressed to go out and carrying a lantern and two Winchesters from the stock downstairs. "They are oiled and loaded," he said, handing me one of the guns. "Let's go. Get your overcoat; we may have to wait long; it may be chilly."

Going from the store to the stable-yard, he spoke back at me: "I haven't told our noble constable nor any of the negroes on the place; they all talk too much."

He stopped at the barn door to make sure that the staple was loose enough for easy access. I looked around. The warm vapor in the air, hinting at rain, hid the stars. Already the trees were leaved out, and the four or five oaks in the yard were blurred shadows, blacker than the night.

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On an outside ladder we climbed to the feed-loft door, let ourselves in, and descended through an opening to the stalls below. These were all in a row, twelve in number, separated by cross-planks a few inches apart. Six of the stalls were empty, some of the winter's accumulation of stock having been sold in the past month. Mr. Stettler indicated two empty places opposite the door, between which was a stall occupied by a dimly seen feeding animal.

"I'll take the one on the right, you the one on the left," he said. "If we kept close together we might talk at the wrong time. There is nothing to do now except to wait; if anybody comes, let him get just through the door with a horse, then run out. I'll be there."

Going with him into the stall he had chosen for himself, I saw him climb up into the corn-box and sit down. I walked around to mine, got into the shallow box, and sat leaning back into the corner made by the partition and the rear wall, finding the position unexpectedly comfortable.

By this time my eyes had grown so used to the darkness that I could discern the outline and bulk of the horse between Mr. Stettler and myself. All along the line the animals were still standing up, fussing noisily with their lips over the bare corn-cobs that no longer held any grain, crunching the shucks and sheaf-oats as second choice. Now and

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then a horse lifted his head over a partition to tease a fellow-feeder; there were angry squeals and little thumpings of tentative kicks, to show what the defending animal would have done if he were only out in the open where he could use his heels freely. The brown mellow odors of corn and hay and oats, the pungent ammoniac manure smell of the stalls, were pleasant in my nostrils. A spear of ice plunged through my backbone, as a rat, on his way down the line of feed-boxes, ran across my legs; and I could not help exclaiming, "Damn!" I listened to hear if the rat would shock one emotional, even if profane, word from the impassive trader; he said nothing.

After a while the squealing and kicking and rattling at the troughs grew less, and here and there a long luxurious sigh told that a horse had lain down for the night. I heard the fresh straw crackle as the animal between us crushed down on it with a deep grunt of satisfaction. Everything was now so quiet that I ran my hand over and over the projecting parts of the Winchester on my lap, telling myself what they were for, that I might keep awake.

It was in the neighborhood of midnight—for the roosters all about over the country were crowing, and they are approximately correct—when there was a slight screaming noise at the door. Then it opened, slowly, wide. A figure stepped inside,

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stopped, seemed to be listening. Closing the door almost to, he flitted to the far end of the stable, and started back down the black passage behind the stalls, hoarsely whispering a tense call that sounded like, "C'up, c'up, meh lady."

Before he had reached me the horse in the next place was whinnying eagerly, joyously. I saw the almost imperceptible figure slide by my hiding-place; and looking through the partition, I could make him out, sitting on the straw, and I think his arms were around the horse's neck. He was crooning ecstatic gibberish, like a mother over her child; the horse was answering with tiny, soft, nuzzling whinnies from deep down in the throat. After a pause I heard words that I could understand.

"Ole Mistis, we is gwine away f'om heah. Ain' nuffin heah fer you an' me now, an' dey wants to keep us apaht. Out yander in de woods, 'cross de road, I got ole Julius tied a-waitin' fer us. I reckon you ain' forgot dat triflin' ole yaller houn' yit, is you? He been mighty pore comp'ny since you lef' us, Ole Mistis; but den I spec I been mighty pore comp'ny fer him—since you been gone away. Yassum, an' I got fifty year 'o cawn in a sack fer you, an' a snack er two fer me an' Jule."

He was stroking her neck. Then his hands must have gone feeling along her ribs.

"Ole Mistis' you sho' is gittin fat. I been seein'

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you git so roun' an' slick an' fine. I reckon you ain't wantin' to run away wif ole Jeff. I guess Mr. Stettler is good to he animals anyhow. An' de Lawd on'y knows whut kind o' luck we gwine to strak, an' it may be, meh lady, you ain' brash to 'lope to Louisiany wif ole Jule an' me.

"An' yit, Ole Mistis, I been prayin' fer good luck fer us. In de dead o' night, free times, I went to Mount Calvary Chapel, I crawled th'oo de win-der, an' I prayed fer luck fer you an' me. I kinder feel, meh lady, 'at luck have changed fer ole Jeff at las'.

"By mawnin' we gwine to be acrost de Louisiany line, an' I spec in less'n a week you an' me is gwine to be settled on some o' dat black swampy lan', richer'n gol' fer cotton an' cane. Somebody gwine to rent me lan' over dar ef I got you, Ole Mistis; an' we gwine to be so deep sunk in de piney woods 'at nobody f'om heah evah will fin' us. Yassum, we gwine to have a cotton crap in de groun' dis yeah yit, we sho' is. We gwine to see our own cotton a-comin' up green outen de groun'.

"Now, git up, Ole Mistis, we mus' be a-movin' on. Git up, meh lady."

The mare got to her feet, and I could see, dimly, a rope hanging from her neck. She backed out of the stall. The stooping stealthy little figure with her pushed open the door, looked out, and, coming back slowly, laid his head against her neck.

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"An' Ole Mistis, even ef we do strak bad luck in Louisiany, we gwine to be togedder. Ain' dat a whole lot? Wellum, hit is fer me. Now we is gwine away f'om heah; an' thank Mr. Stettler kin'ly fer his cawn an' oats. He good to he animals anyhow. Lawdy, Lawdy, I bet ole Jule gwine to teck on scan'lous when he see you, meh lady. Now come on, Ole Mistis."

He stepped out through the door cautiously. It closed to behind him, but, the fastening pulling loose, it swung open again. I heard the soft fall of the horse's feet in the white sand of the hoof-dug yard. I listened to catch the sound of Mr. Stettler stirring. He was not stirring. I heard the great oak latch of the stable-yard gate lift and presently fall into place again.

"Mr. Stettler?" I called.

"Yes."

"Did you hear?"

"Yes."

Down the line of stalls a horse sighed gratefully. In a corner a cricket was chirping. Outside, the wind moving through the little green leaves was as the faint hubbub of a multitudinous gathering of tiny voices far away. Out beyond the store, across the road, in the clump of woods, I listened to hear a hound bellowing. I found my fingers feeling over and over the projecting points of the Winchester on my lap, not to keep awake now. After

a while I noticed that they were rubbing back and forth along the gun-barrel where it was wet.

I don't know how many minutes passed. I heard the oak latch lift again, the soft fall of feet on the hoof-dug ground, a low whinnying coming nearer. A figure stepped hurriedly through the door and into the stall between Mr. Stettler and me.

"Ole Mistis, I cain' do it. Ef I hadn't 'a' named you dat name I could 'a' done it."

Then the figure ran out through the door. After a while I slipped down from the feed-box, went to my room, and crawled into bed. A considerable time after that I heard Mr. Stettler come in and get into his bed.

The next day Jeff and his belongings were moved to one of Mr. Stettler's small farms. Ole Mistis was with him. I left that part of the country the next year, but Mr. Stettler occasionally writes me now. He always says Jeff and his Ole Mistis are doing very well. I never have any fears about them. Having had supper one evening, several weeks after the night in the stable, Mr. Stettler, turning his back and walking to a rear window, said rather fiercely, "Damn it, it just wouldn't do to let *anything* separate those two, would it?"

THE DROUGHT¹

By DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH

BESSIE HICKSON gazed in despair at her little vegetable garden, which the drought had killed. She and Ed had planted it with eager pride in the early Texas spring, thinking that it would furnish their living through most of the summer, and that they could sell enough extra vegetables from it to provide for their other necessities until autumn. Ed would have no money coming in till he had sold his cotton in the autumn, for he was a tenant farmer, working a few acres "on shares," planting only cotton and wholly dependent on the success of that single crop.

The garden had flourished flamboyantly at first, she and Ed tending it with the enthusiasm of very young and newly married folk who adore their first garden, and with the anxiety of those who realize that much depends upon its growth. But the drought had come with its hot days and dewless nights, and now the gay, green plants were

¹ From *The Century Magazine*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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shriveled and dead, the corn-stalks standing like skeletons that rattled in the wind, the withered bean vines trailing from their rude sticks in disarray, and all the carefully tended beds full of dead leaves and sifting, powdery dust.

As the young wife sat by the window of her house, looking at the ruined garden and the cotton-field beyond it, she permitted herself for the first time to face her situation squarely. Until now she had hidden the facts behind her, trusting with the unreasoning optimism of youth to some illogical reversal of events that would make her life again the easy, pleasant thing it had always been until recently. But now she took her thoughts out as from some dark closet into the light of day and considered them. She needed money desperately, and none was available. In September there would be a baby, and she must make its tiny clothes. She had already delayed too long, but now at last something must be done.

"What am I going to *do*?" she asked herself querulously. "I don't see any way out—unless——"

She shrank from that "unless." She wouldn't face that yet; perhaps there would be some other way.

The house, a mere shanty set on the edge of the cotton-field, warped by sun and rain, its paint washed away save for a few cracked flakes, its

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porch lurching forward, and its shed-kitchen dragging back like a slattern's skirt that is hitched up in front and trailing in the rear, was obviously a house that had given up hope.

She could see Ed in the field, "chopping cotton," his body, clad in faded blue overalls, bent over the hoe as he patiently cut the weeds from the rows, a red bandana handkerchief about his neck, and his serious young face shaded by a Mexican straw hat, with broad brim and peaked crown. The sturdy young cotton plants, not yet hurt by the drought that had killed less hardy growths, lifted proud leaves to the light, as in defiance of inimical forces of nature, as if daring the drought to touch that field. Surely rain would come before the cotton crop was ruined, Bess Hickson told herself. The autumn would bring them money, but she could not wait till then.

"It's middle o' June now," she whispered. "I can't wait no longer. There ain't nothing I can do—unless—unless I wrote to ask pappy for money. I'd rather die than do that."

Her mind fled from its dreary present to the past, so recent, yet so remote! Until a few months before Bessie had shaken a gay head with its crinkly red-brown hair as defiantly as a frisky colt at anything that did not please her, and had twinkled her amber-colored eyes at tiresome duties. Country neighbors had said her father spoiled her,

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but Jeff Holcomb had been wont to laugh gruffly and say, "Well, ef Bess an' I suit each other, nobody else has got any kick comin'."

She had not heard from him or written to him since her elopement the autumn before. With a shiver she remembered his cold fury when she told him of her marriage. She had followed him out to the cow-pen to keep him company while he did the milking, as she often used to do, for they had been fast cronies, she and this hard man who had loved nobody in the world but his motherless daughter.

"Pappy, Ed Hickson and I got married to-day," she had faltered as he straightened up to rest a moment from his task.

When, in answer to his look of dazed astonishment, she repeated her frightened avowal, he had lunged to his feet, hurling over the pail of milk beside him.

"Damnation! Then git your duds an' git out of my house—quick!"

"But, Pappy," she had cried in alarm, "you'll *like* Ed when you know him better!"

"Like him! He ain't got no more backbone than a twine string. I wouldn't give the scrapin's of my boot-heel for him—an' you've married him!" His wrath seemed about to choke him.

She had laid importunate hands on his arm, only to be shaken off.

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"But, listen, Pappy! He's just a boy, only twenty-one. He hasn't had a chance yet."

"I reckon he thinks he'll get his chance by settin' up here to be supported by me; but he's missed his guess," was the grim rejoinder.

"No, Pappy," she had interposed eagerly; "he's rented a piece of land across the Brazos, about forty miles off, an' he's goin' to farm it. We'll live there."

"A pore tenant farmer, scratchin' somebody else's land to raise a bale or two of cotton! An' to think you've throwed yourself away on this *nothin'*, you fool, when I'd 'a' done anything in the world for you!"

She had shrunk in terror from this thick-voiced, furious man, this stranger to her.

"But, Pappy, I wouldn't 'a' thought you'd treat me like this!" Her voice had broken on a sob.

His clenched fists and rigid veins accused her.

"Go, I tell you, damn you! I don't want ever to see you or hear from you again. An' don't come crawlin' to me when he starves you, as he'll sure do."

She had whirled from him, sobbing "*I won't!*" with something of his own fierce pride in her voice.

Until now she had kept her word about seeing him or writing to him. She had meant to write, of course, for she loved him. She had meant to send him a loving letter, not to ask any favor, but

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to tell when she could that he had been mistaken, that Ed was doing well, and that she was happy. She had waited till she might be able to tell him that.

All through the winter she had waited in the rickety house through which the searching "north-ers" crept. She had thought of the comfortable living-room at home, with its roaring open fire, of her own chamber, furnished girlishly, as she and Ed had huddled over the stove in their front room, or eaten their meager meals from the table in the shed-kitchen. Those two rooms were all they had. She had thought to write in the spring, as soon as Ed had got his crop started promisingly, so that she could speak with optimism; but since the drought had ruined their vegetable garden and was threatening to damage their cotton, the prospect was not one to boast of.

She could scarcely bear to think of going on forever like this, in a tenant farmer's struggle between the elements and debt. To farm land "on shares" meant mortgaging all one's hopes of a crop in the stores to pay for supplies through the year, so that if the cotton failed, one was swamped under hopeless obligations. Already Ed looked dejected when she told him of any household need, so that she had reduced her requests to the lowest possible limit.

At thought of the future, she was sick with ap-

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prehension. Her under-nourished body felt a physical fear of what lay before her, and her spirit cowered at the idea of their cruel poverty.

"I wouldn't ask pappy for nothin' for myself," she muttered. "I'd starve an' freeze an' go naked, as I've pretty near done a'ready, before I'd call on him, after what he said. But baby's got to have some clothes, an' Ed needs proper food to do his work on—an' there ain't no other way as I can see."

And so presently she wrote:

Dear Pappy:

I've been meaning to write you for a long time, but I haven't had much news to tell you. I think about you lots, and I wish I could see you. I love you just like I used to, Pappy, and more, because I reckon I've got more sense now than when I treated you like I did.

Ed's mighty good to me, Pappy. He ain't never spoke a cross word to me yet, and he does the best he can. But he's had a run of bad luck lately; it looks like. The drought killed our truck garden, and we are out of money. Won't you let us have enough to make out on till our cotton's sold? We need money for groceries, and I want some for something special besides. There ain't nobody else to give it to me, Pappy, but you. I'll tell you later what I'm going to do with part of it.

When Ed gets on better, I'm coming home to see you. You'll let me, won't you?

Your girl,
BESSIE.

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"If the baby's a boy, I'll name him for his grandpa," she said, with an old-time lift of her head, and a sparkle coming into her amber-colored eyes. "I know pappy ain't held spite against me for eight months, but he's been waiting for me to write. Pappy was always bitter proud when he got his back up about anything."

She estimated that she could get an answer to her letter by Friday, and she could scarcely control her impatience during the intervening time. Now that the struggle involved in making her decision was over, she realized as she had not before what wretchedness she had endured—needlessly, as she now told herself. Why hadn't she written long before?

On Friday morning she threw her apron over her head and ran down the road to wait for the rural postman, glad that Ed was working in the far end of the field, so that he could not see her. She would tell him about it in good time, and she pictured the relief that would come to his sober young face.

The sun beat fiercely down upon her as she waited. Far down the road came a whirl of yellow-gray dust that might conceal the carrier and his cart. Why didn't he hurry and bring her letter from pappy? As she stood there, her memory drew pictures of her father, a man passionate in his love for her, passionate in his angers. She

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could see his big frame stoop as he folded her in his arms, his brown eyes alight with devotion. Other people feared the frown he wore, but for her his mouth and eyes had always smiled till that last day. She was beginning to realize what a parent's love for a child is, and she groped toward understanding of how her unconsidered action had wounded him. Wasn't his fury merely from thwarted hopes for her, from jealousy of a husband who could not make her life what his father heart had dreamed of for her?

She leaned tremulously against the barbed-wire fence, her gaze sweeping the little farm in its pitiful details, the small house forlorn of paint, the few chickens scratching drearily about the steps, the bare yard, the cotton-field where Ed was toiling away. She closed her eyes for an instant to vision another farm in the Brazos "bottom," a rich, well-cared-for place, with its white house and cluster of outbuildings set among hackberry-trees. She saw a graying, middle-aged man going about his chores, milking in the cow-pen with no daughter to companion him with her chatter, sitting alone on the porch at evening, always solitary, missing his girl every hour.

"A girl don't never have but one pappy!" she murmured.

The carrier halted his fat, wheezy horse and leaned from his cart.

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"Well, I got a letter for you this morning," he said sociably.

Trembling, she took the envelope addressed in the sprawling hand she well knew. She felt unable for the moment to open it, for her heart seemed determined to bound out of her body; but her eyes caressed the name his hand had penned. How strange it must have felt for pappy to write that new name, Mrs. Ed Hickson! She held the letter in her hand and watched the postman jog along the road till his cart was again obscured in the cloud of dust.

Her quivering fingers tore off the end of the envelope, and drew out a folded sheet from which fluttered a blue slip of paper, a postal order for fifty dollars.

"O Pappy!" she cried ecstatically.

And so he loved her, as always! And so, as always, he delighted to give her without demur what she asked!

She held the letter against her leaping heart before she read it.

And so you think you can come it over me so easy, do you? Treat me like dirt, send me nary a word for eight months, and never give me a thought till you need money. *Well, you can't!* That fine husband of yours can support his wife. The only use you can put my money to is to buy yourself decent clothes to leave him in. I hope you're ready to do that.

THE DROUGHT

If you're willing to cut loose from him, you come on home, and I'll do for you same as ever. I want you back, as you might know. But I want my girl back, not Ed Hickson's wife! Unless you've changed mightily, I know you'll act honest in this.

JEFF HOLCOMB.

When she had read the letter twice over, and realized that it said what it did, a faintness swept over her, and she clutched the barbed-wire fence for support, as the cotton rows overran one another and blurred before her anguished eyes. *Pappy!*

Staggeringly she crept back into the house, to fall on the bed and lie there, shaken by tearless shudders, till it was time to get Ed's noonday dinner ready. She mustn't let Ed know!

The next morning she gathered together the coarse sacks in which flour and corn-meal and sugar had come, and boiled them for a long time on the stove, and then hung them in the sun to bleach. She had never been taught to sew, and when she set about her task, without any patterns to guide her, her unaccustomed fingers were very clumsy. She wept as the rough cloth scratched her hands, and she thought how harsh it would be for tender baby skin. How had life so incomprehensibly trapped her at eighteen?

At first she was fearful lest Ed might notice that something troubled her, and then she felt hurt

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that he did not. She told herself that he was only a boy, and that he couldn't realize what she was going through, and that he had his own worries. The drought was beginning seriously to menace the cotton, and his gaze was ever on the fields, as if by taking thought he might call down the saving rain. The graceful, upstanding plants were still green, and opening great white blossoms like hibiscus or mallows. Bess had always loved the cotton blooms, but now she felt terror at thinking how her fate hung on them. The flowers that lasted such a brief time, changing from milky pearl as they first opened to a soft rose, and then to lavender as they died, were such lovely things, if only they didn't have such tyrannic power over man!

"The cotton's stood up pretty well so far, but the drought's beginning to hurt it," Ed commented forebodingly one day. He had laid down a "pallet," a quilt spread out on the porch floor, so that he might rest during the worst of the noonday heat.

A lizard darted across the porch, panting with heat, its bright, beady eyes winking ironically at him. A scissor-tail balanced himself on the barbed-wire fence, and from somewhere a jay sent his jeering cry.

"A farmer shore has a tough time of it," Ed went on moodily. "No matter how hard he works,

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the weather can always beat him if it takes a mind. Looks like the weather's got a spite against us sometimes."

"It's awful hard on folks as well as crops," Bessie answered apathetically.

She felt withered from the heat, which daily grew worse, and weak from lack of food. She so dreaded to harass Ed by requests for supplies that she stinted herself in order to give him what he needed, and she was hungry all the time. And their little house in the open field, unshaded by trees, was like an oven, especially when the fire was made in the wood-stove for cooking.

Ed worked doggedly in the field as the drought grew more intolerable, pitting his puny strength against an unseen force that menaced and derided him. From her window Bess could watch him toiling at his task, his patient figure comical in its grotesque garb, tragic in the intensity of its struggle against a cruel force of nature. The cotton-plants were stunted in their growth and had lost their bright, erect dignity and their shimmer of refreshing green. Their leaves hung limp, covered with a gray dust from the road.

"We won't make *nothing* if this here drought don't break," Ed declared in desperation one day as he pushed his plate from him at the table.

Bessie lifted a drawn and haggard face.

"I think I'll *die* if this keeps up much longer!"

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"You got it easier'n I have." His tone sounded harsh. "You can lie round the house, but I got to work in this sun that's hot enough to frizzle the insides of a horned frog!"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"You oughtn't to speak cross to me, though!"

"Lord alive! don't you realize what a feller's up against when he's got to bake his brains in this murderin' heat?" he cried savagely. "An' he don't know whether all his hard knocks is goin' for nothin', after all! A farmer's life is a dog's life, let me tell you, if he's farmin' on shares. This here drought is gettin' on my nerves."

He rose abruptly from the table, rasping his chair against the floor in a way to set her own nerves quivering.

"You don't never think of my feelings!" she cried impetuously. "This sort o' life is mighty hard for me, that ain't never been used to it. I didn't expect——"

"Then you oughtn't to married a poor man," he jeered.

"I wish I hadn't," she flung at him, and then shrank back, appalled at the sight of his face. He looked as if some one had stabbed him in the back.

In an instant they were in each others' arms.

"Oh, we don't mean what we're saying!" she cried desperately. "It's this heat that upsets us so.

THE DROUGHT

Nothing matters, so long as we've got each other."

She felt his body tremble as he held her close, and saw the tears run down his cheeks.

"Yes, this drought tears us all to pieces," he muttered. "We got to stand up against it the best we can, or it'll get us."

Day after day the sky was cloudless and intensely blue. Day after day the sun strode nakedly across the heavens, and sank in many-colored fire in the west at evening. Sometimes the air was still, so that they panted for breath, but more often the hot winds blew across the field, sprinkling over everything fine gray dust like ashes of despair. The baked earth cracked in deep fissures like gaping, bloodless wounds.

One day from curiosity Bess broke an egg on the top of a stone in the sun by her kitchen door, and watched the white cook as in a frying-pan.

"Hot enough to fry an egg in the sun!" she cried shrilly, though there was no one to hear her. Afterward she scraped up the egg and ate it, reproaching herself for her wastefulness. Their supplies were running tragically low, and both she and Ed were weakened from lack of food, since Ed hated risking refusal for further credit at the store.

Ed would gaze at his cotton-field with a look of

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desperation in his eyes, and then scan the blue emptiness of sky in search of a cloud, as a shipwrecked mariner on a lonely sea might look for a sail.

"It's enough to drive a feller mad to have to work ag'in' the odds like this," he growled morosely one day. "Looks like the elements was shakin' us like a terrier shakes a rat, an' laughin' at us all the time."

"Don't you reckon it'll rain *soon*?" Bess asked in a parched voice, fanning herself with her apron.

"Don't seem like it'll ever rain again; looks like it's forgot how. I'd ruther be that there yellow dog than a tenant farmer!"

He flung his hand out toward an old hound that had stolen in from the road and lay looking forlornly at them, his tongue hanging far out of his mouth, his bony sides quivering. He seemed mutely to entreat some reason for this suffering he had to endure. The half-dozen chickens, huddled in the shade of the house, drooped miserably, their wings spread fanwise in the effort to cool their bodies.

Bess lay wilted on the bed much of the time now, though the bed itself was uncomfortably hot to the touch. She conjured up images of the cool, shaded rooms in her father's house, of the protecting trees, of the creek that ran back of the house, but chiefly of the plentiful things to eat. Home!

THE DROUGHT

If only she could open the refrigerator there and eat her fill for once, and drink deep drafts of ice-cold milk! She and Ed never had any ice or milk, or, in fact, anything that they could possibly do without. Day by day there was less to eat; the cupboard was almost empty, and the fevered chickens were dying of starvation and heat.

There is something about intense heat that devitalizes body and spirit far more than bitter cold can do. One perishes inwardly under it, one surrenders hope, and yet has not strength enough for active despair.

"Maybe pappy would have wrote different, if he had known I was hungry," Bess whispered to herself one day. She talked more to herself when Ed was in the field than she did to him when he was present, for she could not share her poignant thoughts with him, lest she add to his suffering and anxiety. "Shorely pappy would have wrote different, if he had known about the baby!"

She sat huddled on the edge of the bed for a long time, and then she crept over to the door, to stand leaning against it, looking up at the sky. The sun, high in the afternoon heavens, shook insolent spears of light at her, and the fleckless blue was a mirror of despair.

Presently she walked to the dresser, where under a concealing sheet of newspaper her father's letter lay. The cracked mirror gave her back a face she

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scarcely recognized, it was so drawn, discolored, ravaged by anxiety, and thin from hunger.

She held the blue slip in her shaking fingers for a long moment.

"If I could only cash this and get enough to eat—for the baby's sake!"

Her fingers closed over it with resolve, her body thrilling at the thought of food; she would call Ed quickly and send him for supplies.

Then the memory of those last terrible moments with her father in the cow-pen swept over her. She heard again his searing words: "I don't want ever to see you or hear from you again! And don't you come crawling to me when he starves you, as he'll sure' do!" She heard her sobbing vow, "I won't!"

Could she take his help now, like a shamed and beaten thing begging for food? If he knew her plight, wouldn't his hatred and contempt for Ed be ten-fold worse than before? How could she put such humiliation upon Ed, poor Ed, who worked so hard and did his pitiful best for her?

If she used this money now, pappy would think Ed responsible for it, would misjudge him further. He was a hard man, but he had always been rigidly honest, and she was his daughter. She saw again the words of his letter, "Unless you've changed mightily, I know you'll act honest in this."

She had changed mightily,—Oh, Pappy, yes!—but she would act honest.

THE DROUGHT

Her weak, relaxing fingers put the blue slip back in its hiding-place, and she turned away.

But the thought of the baby was with her all the time now, a sense of her responsibility pressing down upon her heart like clods upon a coffin. She and Ed would scan the sky countless times a day, to find nothing more hopeful than vaporous wisps of cloud that vanished tantalizingly the while they gazed, or else a blue dome of nothingness.

One night while Ed slept restlessly beside her she lay and gazed at the pallid and starveling new moon that looked at her from between the branches of a tree whose leaves had fallen in mid-summer. She shook as she muttered, "It's the worst kind o' luck to see the new moon for the first time through brush." She thought of a sermon she had once heard an evangelist preach from the text, "I will arise and go to my father." She pictured herself as returning to the old home, and thrilled at thought of pappy's fierce, undemonstrative affection that would receive her back if she met his requirements and came to stay. She could see pappy sitting on the porch at evening, no longer lonely, with a little child in his arms.

But what of Ed? She thought of the boyish face now seamed with lines no young face ought to have to wear, of the sweet temper sharpened by suspense and want, of the pleasant, drawling voice that now was harsh. Tragedy looked at her

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out of the gray eyes that had wooed her with smiles a year ago. How could she desert him now when they loved each other through it all? She and Ed were *married*, and pappy nor nobody else had a right to try to separate them. Well, it was up to her to decide.

"I can't noways leave him when he's having such a hard time!" she whispered to her hot pillow. "Everything an' everybody has turned against him, looks like, and his wife ought t' stand by him. I'll stick!"

When Bessie started to get breakfast she realized that there was nothing in the cupboard but a little flour, enough perhaps to make biscuit a couple of times. She had avoided telling Ed just how things were, but now the pinch of hunger was acute.

She watched him till he had scraped the syrup from his plate with the last morsel of biscuit, and then she faltered:

"We—we haven't got anything to eat, Eddie. Hadn't you better go to town an' get some groceries to-day?"

A tormented look came into his eyes.

"I ain't got the face to ask Bill Adams for no more credit."

She held one hand on the edge of the table to steady herself as the heat waves danced and blurred before her eyes.

THE DROUGHT

"But—we *got* to have something to eat!" she cried. "Think of the baby!"

He threw his hands up passionately.

"Ain't I thinkin' about it all the time? Ain't I fair' driv crazy thinkin' about it? Thoughts don't get you nowhere if you haven't got no money!"

Nevertheless, he rose and made ready to walk the five miles to town.

"Maybe you can get a lift part ways, coming or going," she drearily encouraged him as he stooped to kiss her.

"Maybe."

She sat on the edge of the bed waiting his return. The pillow was too hot for her to rest her cheek against it, so she slumped forward, swaying from weakness, losing all sense of time. She watched the road, but there was little passing. It was as if life had been suspended for a time because of the heat.

It was mid-afternoon when she saw Ed come dragging up the road as if he could hardly lift one foot ahead of the other, his head sunk forward, his arms hanging limp. His hands were empty!

"You so tired, honey?" she murmured, laying her tear-wet cheek against his as he came in.

"Dog-tired," he panted, sinking into a chair. "My head hurts," he went on, putting his hands to his temples. "Feel funny, like an iron kettle full o' live coals."

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"This heat has been too much for you." She passed caressing fingers across his burning forehead. "And you—didn't—get anything?"

"No." He shook his head as if the effort were an agony, and his voice was thick and lifeless, as though a corpse were speaking. "Bill Adams said he'd be ruint, with all he'd let out to farmers, if cotton didn't make. Said, if it went on like this a couple of days longer, nobody'd make anything. Said to come back if it rained in a couple o' days. But it ain't ever goin' to rain no more!"

She stood beside him, helpless for a moment, unable to speak; but at thought of his need she roused herself.

"Come on back an' sit in the kitchen with me, honey, while I get you some supper." She felt a need to have him near her, and her love reached out pitiful hands to his in the face of menacing future.

He staggered after her into the shed-kitchen.

"I'll make the fire for you," he said, picking up a stick of wood, but holding it in uncertain hands.

Bessie shook the last flour from the bag into the pan and began making up biscuit dough, working it with her fingers.

"Maybe you can get something tomorrow from one o' the other stores," she suggested, with an effort at an encouraging smile.

His look contradicted her.

THE DROUGHT

"I tried 'em. They're all in the same box. I dunno what we're goin' to do!" His voice rose sharply, and his eyes were unnatural in their stare.

Bess looked at him through a veil of tears. She had never loved him so much as at that moment, so pitifully young he was, so helpless, so desperate! Her young eyes gazed at him with more than wifely love; with maternal consecration, with a look such as his own mother might have turned on him as she died. She was his wife; she would die beside him, if need be, with no word of complaint.

And then she seemed to hear from some far distance a little child crying, its thin, poignant wail piercing her soul. Some force seemed to tear her heart out of her body, crush it with iron force, and then thrust it back.

"Ed," she cried, with heartbreak in her voice, "O Ed, I guess I'd better go back to pappy, darling!"

"He wouldn't let you."

Tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Yes, he wrote for me to come."

He lifted his head with a jerk.

"When'd you hear from him?"

"Some time back. I didn't say nothing to you about it, because I didn't want to go." She looked at him fearfully, to see how he would take it.

He sat in silence for a moment, as if his disturbed brain was attempting to comprehend this new

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thought, his nervous fingers balancing the stick of wood. Finally he dragged out his words.

"Maybe it would be better for you to go home for a little visit, to pick up an' get strong. I can come for you after cotton-pickin', an' maybe we can find a new place an' start over again. Surely there won't be a drought next year, and we can get on better. I'd feel easier to have you taken right care of in September."

She held clenched hands on the rim of the bread-pan. How unselfish he was in his thought for her, and how she loved him! But she couldn't lie to him just as she was leaving him.

"No, Ed honey," she cried piercingly, "pappy said I couldn't come 'less it was to stay!"

His bloodshot eyes held a bewildered look.

"But he don't want me to stay there?"

"No." Her whole body trembled, as if her joints were water. "He says—if I come—I've got to leave you!"

His look of bewilderment deepened.

"Leave me, Bess girl? Why, we're married!"

"Yes, that's what I say. It's near 'bout killing me to even think of it!" Her tears dripped down on her hands.

"You wouldn't leave me?" His voice had an acute ring like that of a child who sees his mother abandoning him. She gave a great sob.

"What can I *do*, Ed darling? I'm half starved,

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though I wouldn't mind that for myself. I'd honestly rather die than be separated from you; but the baby, Eddie——"

"You'd leave me when I'm havin' such a hard deal from all creation? You'd turn your back on me when it looks like God and man has forsaken me, an' the elements was makin' sport of me?" His eyes were wild.

She leaned against the table, sobbing convulsively.

"O God, why is life so hard for us? There ain't nobody nigh for me to turn to, forty miles away from all the folks I ever knew! I've got to leave you, Eddie, when I'd rather be cut into little bits an' burned in the fire!"

"When you aimin' to go?" His tone was deadly still.

"The sooner, the better, I reckon, if it's got to be."

He laughed queerly.

"You can't go. You ain't got any money."

She nodded her wretched head.

"Yes, pappy sent me the money for my ticket."

"How much?" he demanded.

"Fifty dollars."

"When?" He sprang to his feet.

"Some time back," she faltered.

"And so you've had money all this time when I was eatin' my soul out! When I couldn't sleep

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nights for thinkin' how I could get somethin' for you to eat, you had fifty dollars hid' away! So that's the kind of wife you are, is it?"

His face was livid, and his eyes glared like a madman's.

Bess shrank from him in terror.

"O Ed, you don't understand!"

He came a step nearer her, his muscles tense.

"By God, you think you'll leave me to live as if you'd never known me! No, damn you, I'll kill you first!"

She saw the leaping light of madness in his eyes, and knew that the heat and his distress had crazed him.

He lunged forward, the stick of wood lifted in his grasp.

"O Eddie, don't! don't!" she cried, stumbling backward and around the table, her hands thrown out in appeal.

As he sprang after her, she jerked the table between them, the dishes crashing to the floor.

"O Ed, don't hit me!" she shrieked, and crumpled to the floor.

Even while they had talked a wisp of cloud as filmy as raveled cotton-wool had floated idly up the sky. Other wisps had stolen from nowhere to join it, till it had hung like a great open cotton-boll high in the blue. Presently darker clouds had piled

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themselves on the horizon, massed and ponderous, like bales of cotton in their brown wrappings. A jagged streak of lightning had slit the face of the sky like a cruel smile.

In a little while a few hesitant drops came down, then more scurried faster from the clouds, until a slow and searching downpour followed. At last the sheeted rain fell like a drop-curtain before the landscape, fell on the cracked earth, which drank it thirstily, on the wilted cotton plants, which lifted grateful leaves, on the roof of the little house on the edge of the field. But the two in the shed-kitchen paid no heed to it.

Until the gathering dusk Ed crouched beside the still figure on the floor. His hands frantically chafed her wrists, his kisses rained on her white face, and his cries implored her to speak to him.

"O Bess girl! I didn't mean it! I wasn't myself!"

When he strained his ears to listen for an answer, he heard only the rain.

Suddenly the wind shifted, bringing a swirl of rain through the window upon that quiet form and unresponsive face. With a swift impulse to shield her, Ed put his arms about the helpless body and dragged it to one side. As he did so, her eyes opened, and looked into his, with dazed questioning at first and then with leaping fear.

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When Ed saw his wife look at him in terror, he struck his hands against his head, with one wordless cry.

The sight of his anguish swept the fear from her eyes, and only love was left. Her weak hands groped toward him, to draw his head against her breast, to hold it there with tenderness, before she gathered strength to speak.

"I'm not hurt, Eddie darling. I understand. And, see, it's raining!"

WINDFALL ¹

By WINIFRED SANFORD

I

ALTHOUGH the well had come in soon after midnight, and it was now the middle of the afternoon, Cora had not seen it. At first she was afraid she would be in the way. Afterward, she was too busy in the kitchen, for beside her own family she had the crews to feed, and six or eight oil men who couldn't take the time to drive thirty miles to town for their meals. And immediately after dinner, the girls, who were sometimes willing to help her, went off to the well and left her alone with the work. "I'll go down when I finish the dishes," Cora promised herself.

By the time the work was done, however, she was tired, soiled and sweaty, and the pasture was full of people who had driven in to see the well. She would have been ashamed to go down as she was. "I'll get cleaned up after a while, and then I'll go down," she thought, as she threw the scraps to the chickens gathered around the doorstep.

¹ From *The American Mercury*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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With the empty bucket in her hand she stopped for a moment in the doorway, under the newspaper fringe which rattled in the hot wind, and gazed into the far corner of the pasture. She could not see the well from the house; she could see only the mast of the drilling machine and the shiny new storage tank rising above the cluster of cars and people. Luke, she knew, was there, and her three girls, and her two boys, and most of her neighbors, for it was Sunday, and no one was working in the fields.

She went through the kitchen and into the bedroom. It was fully as hot as the kitchen, but it was dark, except for the pattern of the sun on the cracked window shade, and there was a bed to lie upon. Cora sat down on the edge of it and took off her house slippers. Her bare toes felt as though they had been glued together with the heat. She stretched them, and rubbed them with a towel she found on the floor; then she lay down on the crumpled sheet with her hand on her cheek.

Now and then, while she rested, she rubbed the side of her nose, or the corner of her mouth, or her neck. She was very tired, and this was the first time she had had the bed to herself since the drillers had come, three weeks ago, and had taken the other bedroom and the other two beds. The girls had moved in with her, and the four of them had lain, night after night, across the bed in a row, with their feet hanging over the side, while Luke and the boys

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had slept on pallets spread down on the kitchen floor.

Cora got up after a few minutes and began to put the room in order. The girls had gone off without making the bed or picking up their clothes, and Cora had to hang their pink nightgowns behind the curtain in the corner, and stuff their stockings in the dresser drawers, and empty the slop jar, which had stood all day full of dirty water, and wipe out the bowl and the soap dish before she could bathe herself.

The cool water made her feel a little better. She sat as long as she dared with her feet in the bowl, but she knew she must hurry if she were to see the well before supper, so she dried herself, after a moment, and put on her clean underwear, and sprinkled a very little of the girls' talcum powder on her neck and arms.

When she had put on her black shoes and stockings and her gray gingham dress, she took her sun-bonnet from its nail in the kitchen and went outside. The chickens were still scratching about in the yard, and stepping into the muddy patches where she had emptied the slop jar. They came running up to her, but she shooed them away. She crossed the yard, passed the barn, skirted the wheat stubble, and entered the pasture.

II

Cars were standing everywhere, like shiny-backed beetles, in the sun. She could smell the hot leather, and the grease and the paint. When she came nearer, she saw the people—the city people, first, spreading rugs in the shade of their sedans, and drinking ice water from thermos jugs, and eating sandwiches and reading the Sunday papers. A little farther on she saw the country people—the men with their suspenders crossed on their backs, and the women with their flowered hats and their black shoes and stockings.

Cora did not really want to speak to any of them. She was always timid in a crowd, and conscious of her sunbonnet and her gingham dress, and lately, since she had lost her teeth, she was ashamed for anyone to see her mouth. They saw her, however, and would not let her pass.

“Say,” they said, all of them looking her up and down, “you won’t be speaking to us, Mrs. Ponder, now you’ve got a well on your place. You and Luke will be too good for us poor folks.”

Cora stood shame-faced, with her fingers over her mouth. “Oh, I don’t know,” she said. She was very much embarrassed. “I come down to see it myself.”

But she could not see it just then, because the men were in the way. There were oil men from

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town, with khaki breeches stuffed into their high boots, and East Indian helmets perched on their heads; there were farmers with creases in diamond-shaped patterns on their necks; and there were men in overalls, dodging the others while they worked with pieces of iron pipe.

"When they move to one side," she thought, "then I'll go over and see it."

Meanwhile she must find her girls. She didn't like to have them running around in a crowd like this with nobody to look after them. It wasn't right. They were dancing, when she found them, some time later, dancing on the grass with boys she didn't recognize. There was a phonograph playing, and they were dancing . . . on Sunday afternoon! Cora was uneasy, and yet she didn't have the heart to stop them. They looked so pretty with their curly heads and their bright dresses and their silk stockings and their fancy kid slippers. She watched them for a time, standing beside an empty automobile, but if they saw her, they gave no sign of it.

She walked back to the country women at last, and sat down with them on the grass, pulling her skirt carefully over her knees. "I wouldn't mind seeing that oil with my own eyes," she said. Yet she did not like to intrude where the men were gathered. They were all laughing and talking and spitting on the ground, and she knew they would

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be uncomfortable if she joined them. They would clear their throats, and mumble good afternoon, and touch their hats. And Luke would frown at her.

She saw Luke, now, hobbling around and smiling foolishly at his neighbors, as though this well were some joke he had played on them. And she saw Whitney, her younger boy, in his bare feet and dirty overalls, helping the men with the pipe. The older boy was nowhere to be seen. Cora sighed, because she was afraid he had gone off somewhere with one of the girls. She had seen him change his shirt, after dinner, and shave, and oil his pompadour, but she hadn't dared to ask him where he was going. He wouldn't have answered her, probably, if she had.

The women among whom she was sitting began to ask her questions. They wanted to know what she would do with the money from the well. Cora answered them with her hand over her mouth, "I don't know," she said, feeling her face grow red. "I don't rightly know what we'll do." She did not like to speak of her teeth, and yet she could think of nothing else she particularly wanted. "We might get a phonograph for the girls," she said at last.

The women were astonished. "Why, haven't you got a phonograph, Mrs. Ponder? You haven't! Nor a radio, neither! Well, what do you know?"

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"We might get a radio, too," said Cora.

"Those girls of yours will sure spend the money, Mrs. Ponder; you can leave it to them."

Cora stiffened at that. "I'd be glad for them to spend it," she said. "I've never been one to begrudge things to my children."

They shook their heads at that, and said it wasn't always a good thing for children to have too much. "They don't have the respect for you they should have, Mrs. Ponder."

Cora looked at the ground, "I know," she said; "I know." She was beginning to wish she had not come down to the well. She might have known the women would be like this. And yet what they said was true enough. She had spoiled her children, and often she was sorry and ashamed. She ought to have made them help today with the work. She ought to have made them stop dancing . . . on Sunday, too, where everyone could see them. And it was true, what they said, that the girls would have had more respect for her, instead of always being ashamed of her. And yet . . .

"They'll want that you should move into the city; that's what they'll want," said one of the women.

Cora winced, because that very thought had been troubling her all day. "It's not likely that we'll be moving to the city," she said.

"They'll want a fine house in the city, Mrs.

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Ponder," said another woman, "and lots of parties and dancing."

Cora did not answer, and presently they left her alone.

She had nothing to do. She watched a red ant travel through the grass with a bit of wheat in his mouth. She watched a cricket scamper past on his high stilts. Finally, she pulled a blade of dusty grass and sucked it, and watched the cars stream into the pasture from the main road. There were Fords filled with farm boys, and smart roadsters from the city, and trucks with the dust as thick as moss on their greasy wheels. They left the gates open and drove where they liked, breaking down the limbs of the mesquite, and staining the grass with drippings of black grease. The crowd was everywhere, trampling the cotton in the next field, climbing through the barbed wire fences, peering into the barn, chasing the chickens in the yard, and marching into the house, even, to use the telephone.

Cora saw the people from the next farm drive up in their touring car, with the idiot boy gaping on the back seat. When they climbed out he followed them about like a foolish dog, grinning at everyone he met. From the back, in his new gray suit and his straw hat, he looked like anyone else; it was only when you saw his face, or his gait, that you suspected.

A few minutes later she saw Jasper Gooley drive

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up in his blue and yellow coupé. She had known Jasper when he was a boy on his father's farm, long before anyone knew there was oil under the cotton. Old Mr. Gooley had been the poorest of them all. All his life he had lived in a one-room shack, with no paint on its boards, and no grass in the yard, and no trees—not even a red cedar to break the wind in the Winter or to give a little shade in the Summer. It was just a bare shack standing on posts, so that the chickens could run underneath to get out of the sun.

Jasper was a boy then, like her Whitney. Cora used to see him lazily chopping cotton, in ragged overalls and a torn Mexican hat. Once she had passed him, on her way home from town, lying on his back in the ditch, where it was shady, and he had looked up at her and laughed. That was before he was old enough for girls.

Cora wondered sometimes what would have happened to Jasper if there had not been oil on his father's land. He would have had to stay at home, then, and run the farm, and make a living, and no doubt he would have settled down like his neighbors, with a wife and a family. Instead of that he had rented the farm to tenants. The very week after his father's death, Jasper had rented the farm and had gone to the city. People shook their heads now when they spoke of him. They said that he was wild, that he drank, and that he always had

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one woman or another on the seat beside him when he drove on the country roads. They said he had had an affair with a married woman in town, which had cost him ten thousand dollars in cash. Perhaps it was true, and perhaps it wasn't; Cora didn't know.

At any rate he had a woman with him now, a large blonde woman in a red hat. Cora saw her squint in a little mirror while she dabbed powder on her nose. She saw Jasper's Panama hat, and his fat hands resting on the wheel, and his puffy cheeks; and when he climbed out of his car, backward, she saw his blue and white striped seersucker trousers, and his white silk shirt, and his white shoes.

She was glad when Jasper passed her by without speaking, for she never knew how to act with city people, or what to say to them. It suited her much better to follow them at a little distance as they made their way toward the well. Now that Jasper had brought a woman among the men, she didn't mind going nearer.

III

She could see the pipe now, sticking up from the ground, and bending over at the top, and she thought she saw a black stream flowing into the tank below, but Jasper stepped in front of her, before she could be sure. She stood behind him,

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one hand supporting her elbow and the other supporting her cheek under her sunbonnet, waiting for him to move.

She felt a little guilty. She knew that Luke would think she ought to go back where she belonged, yet she did want to see the oil. She wanted to see what it looked like. She felt as she did sometimes at funerals, when she wanted a last look at a face she had known, yet hated to push herself forward.

She was feeling more and more out of place when she saw Whitney coming toward her, stepping over pipes and wrenches, and elbowing the crowd. Even in his old clothes, she thought proudly, he was the best looking of her children. The others were all a little too thin and sharp-featured, but Whitney was going to be broad and handsome, and sure of himself. He came up to her now, before everyone, not caring what they thought.

"Say, mama," he said, "did you see the oil, did you?"

"No, son, I haven't seen it yet."

"Come on, then, and look at it."

He took her straight up to the tank.

"Look in there, mama," he said.

Cora glanced quickly about her to see if anyone disapproved before she dared to lean over the rim.

"See it?" asked Whitney.

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She saw it . . . thick black oil, with a dirty scum on the top. The smell of it made her feel sick at her stomach.

"I see it, son; I see it."

Just then a sudden stream gushed from the mouth of the pipe, green in the sunlight. Whitney took her hand and held her finger in the stream.

"You taste it, mama," he said eagerly.

Cora touched her finger to her tongue. It tasted like kerosene, and she had to spit it out on the grass.

"It's oil, mama," said Whitney. "See?"

"Yes, son, it's oil."

He wanted to tell her all about it. "They think it's going to make a hundred barrels," he said. "And they're going to drill another one over yonder where you see the stake."

"Yes, son, yes."

"And after that they're going to drill to the south. They're going to drill a lot of them."

"I see."

Cora was beginning to feel very uncomfortable. She felt conspicuous, standing here where everyone could look at her, with no teeth in her mouth, and the oil still greasy on her finger. She had to stoop, at last, and wipe it off, secretly, on her stocking. Even then a little of it remained, black under her nail.

She was really glad, at last, to find an excuse to back away from the men. She saw part of a news-

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paper impaled on a mesquite thorn, beyond the well. She walked over to it, without attracting anyone's attention, and picked it up. Then she saw a scrap of shiny brown paper and a wad of tinfoil, and beyond that, in a clump of cactus, a piece of sandwich wrapping, streaked with yellow salad dressing. There was an empty bottle lying under the wrapping, and bits of broken glass shining here and there all over the pasture. "Tomorrow," thought Cora, "after the washing is finished and on the line, I'll bring a bucket and gather it up before the cattle get into it."

On the top of a little rise, not far from the house, she stopped and looked back at the well. Luke and Whitney, she saw, were talking to Jasper Gooley. Jasper had his left hand on the shoulder of the woman he had brought with him from town; and as Cora watched, he crossed one white foot over the other and put his right hand on Whitney's shoulder. Whitney stood tall under his weight. Cora wondered, with fear in her heart, what Jasper was saying to her son.

THE CONQUEST OF MIKE ¹

By JOHN W. THOMASON, JR.

THE service-record book of Mike Guantánamo, private, U. S. Marine Corps, shows that he joined the guard of the flag-ship, Caribbean station, when that swanky cruiser put in for her annual small-arms practice. It is further noted that he was born there, under McCalla Hill, where the trades unceasingly flail the blue bay, rimmed around with barren amethystine hills. The first sounds his baby ears heard were the Marine bugles at the Fish Point Barracks, and the first men he saw in his life were the tall leathernecks of the station-guard. Other data in his staff returns, duly signed by his proper seniors, give his height as 11 inches at the shoulder; weight 22 pounds stripped; vision, 20/20 each eye—(noted: can see a bone better than that); religion, Scalawag; next of kin and home address, mother, Bessie, care Sergeant Eisenberg, M. B., N. S., Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Complexion, black but comely, with four white feet. Filed

¹ From *Red Pants*; copyright, 1926, 1927, by Charles Scribner's Sons. By permission of the publishers.

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with the other service records of the flag-ship's guard.

Reared thus among the bugles, imbibing the air of the profession of arms with his mother's milk, it was perfectly natural that he should follow his destiny down to the sea in the first battle-wagon that came along without a mascot. He took to his flag-ship billet without a rub. By the time his ship was shaken down for her cruise around the banana-ports, Private Mike was as integral a part of her guard as the first sergeant. He knew all the bugle calls. He had his station for all the drills. Fire and Collision—you fall in at the port quarter for that. Abandon Ship—his place was in No. 2 motor launch; and when the high shrill notes of General Quarters went, he was on No. 5 gun-crew, and he would cock a wise ear and scud like a black shadow to his own place—present and accounted for, sir! When full guard and band were called away to the quarter-deck for the reception of distinguished visitors, or to attend the official goings and comings of the admiral, Mike formed up to the left of the left guide, facing the gangway, motionless as a blob of ink on the white planking; until the Captain of Marines rasped out "Pr'sent—Hupp!" And the starched and shiny khaki ranks snapped up their rifles with one precise sound. Then Mike would elevate his smart slim body on his haunches, and stand as steady as the best of them. Placed so,

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he caught the eye of admirals and generals and others of the great, and received their compliments with composure.

Private Mike enjoyed the esteem of his own admiral, and had the privileges of the admiral's sacred hatch, and the admiral's barge, should he desire to go ashore at other than boat-hours. It was, altogether, a good ship for a little dog, and he loved it; but he loved operations ashore best of all. "Away, Landing Force," always found his black head over the gunwale in the Marines' boat, between the automatic rifles. Ashore, he charged along the ramp, yapping excitedly, while the men doubled up from the landing to form on the road, and at "Squads right—March!" he swung smartly from the line of file-closers to his highest pride—a post one pace front and right of the Captain of Marines. This put him front and centre of the column; the Marines led the landing force, and Mike led the Marines. Occasionally he would drop back and leap at the Captain's hand, just to assure his officer that everything was going well; it was plain that he felt his honors and responsibilities. Balboa, where the flag-ship lived at a buoy by the cross-roads of the world while not engaged in government business up and down the sea, knew Mike and learned to look for him when the flag-ship's people came ashore. . . . A fine, taut little dog, elegant and ebony, his tail cocked at a three-

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quarter curve over his stern, leading three hundred sailors and Marines. . . .

It is pleasant to relate that his conduct was for the most part exemplary—as was the guard's—under the hand of that large, jovial, and competent officer, Captain Steve Blade. Mike's book showed only one offense, a regrettable A. W. O. L., for which his commanding officer awarded him a week's solitary on dry bones and water. It was well known that a low Costa Rican slut from Port Limón was to blame; King David also fell. Nor did Mike sulk under punishment; discipline must be maintained, and his captain knew just where to tickle a little dog's ears, and when one can be tickled without loss of dignity. Mike was convinced that Captain Steve was a god, greater even than the big first sergeant.

But in the fulness of time Captain Steve Blade accomplished his sea duty, and his relief reported aboard. Mike heard the Marines discussing it in No. 7 gun-compartment. . . . "Yeah—a tall, skinny captain. Came off in the 6.20 boat. His name—exec.'s writer told me his name—whatinell was that name?—" "Anybody know him? What's he done?" "Bozo, he says he's heard of him—very diff'rent from Cap'n Steve, he is . . ." "You said it! They're all diff'rent from Cap'n Steve!—What was it Bozo heard? . . ." Such matters are always of uneasy interest to the files, and Mike, his beady

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eyes going from face to face, sensed the uneasiness and was troubled. The curl went out of his tail, and he turned in early that night.

Next day was Saturday—commanding officer's inspection. Mike stood this ceremony on the gun-deck, with his bunkie, the police sergeant. When the gold and white of the naval uniforms went by, there was a new officer in khaki with Cap'n Steve—the new Captain of Marines. Mike was brought up to be introduced, and surrendered his paw without enthusiasm. He was sure he would not like this fellow. He listened attentively to the talk of transfers that went around later. (There's always such talk.) In the afternoon Captain Steve Blade's non-commissioned officers rowed him ashore in the whale-boat, and Mike never saw him again.

Now, an outfit takes its tone from its officers. Napoleon said once: "There are no bad regiments. There are only bad colonels." Given proper recruit-training and decent non-coms, an organization will hang together and function after a fashion, but the officer transmits or kills the delicate thing called morale, that makes all the difference between a good outfit and a bad one. The new captain understood this as well as any man. He had taken over a splendid weapon, this guard: 103 Marines, 80 rifles, 2 machine guns, and the 37-millimetre gun for landing force; it was an organization proved and competent and regarded with schooled respect

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by more than one frustrated Latin-American *junta*. He set himself diligently to learn it in all its parts, and to get the confidence of his people. The way to do that is to know your job—all your job—everything about it. The guard was quick to realize that, while this bird lacked the expansive personality of Cap'n Steve, he knew his stuff. He didn't talk much, but what he said meant something. And he did things. The guard conceded, somewhat grudgingly, that they were getting on about as well as ever. All except Mike, who was not consoled. When the new captain—who liked little dogs, in moderation—whistled to him one morning and would have fraternized, Mike affected not to hear, and retired under the overhang of the after turret, where he would not be subjected to the indignity of caresses. The guard, standing in ranks for Quarters, observed. The snub was utter and direct. Mike would have none of him. Dragged out by a scandalized sergeant, his manner plainly said that he would carry on if he had to—but as to permitting any familiarities, he'd see that captain in hell first.

The situation was more distressing when the landing force went ashore for drill. Private Mike, openly insubordinate, hid under the 3-inch field-piece. He was carried over the side, regretting the day that he was born, and when the line swung into column and took the road, Mike was in the line

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of file-closers, with his tail at half-mast. Such a thing had never been seen before; the files stretched their necks at it, and the squads wavered all ways at once, so that the commander, landing force, a three-striper and a violent man, sent an orderly to the Captain of Marines: "Sir, the commander's compliments, and the commander says what in hell is the matter with the dress of the first company?" Things were not so good, and continued so. "Yuh take a dawg, a dawg's got an instinct about things," said the croaker of the guard darkly. "Yuh know, Bozo said he heard somethin' about this——"

One morning, about the start of the rainy season, the flag-ship lay at her buoy by the cross-roads of the world, and the hard-driven deck divisions, having scrubbed down with sand, were clearing for muster. The bright-work winked in the sun, and the colors blew out in a little wind from the open sea. The admiral took the air on his quarter-deck, his satellites around him. The ship hummed with ordered activity. Into this came a radio—and by some mysterious underground, all hands and the blue-jackets' cat, Nig, knew its contents almost before the Marine orderly was out of the flag-office with it. There were bugles, and yeomen dashed around in all directions, colliding violently with the commander's, the captain's, and the admiral's marine messengers. The engineer officer, who had been having a quiet pipe aft, scuttled below to his

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engine. The fat paymaster bawled for a boat and hustled ashore with a working party to lay in ice and things. The admiral's barge foamed out with such of the staff as slept ashore. In their compartment, the Marines scoured rifles already speckless, and certain enthusiasts sharpened their bayonets with a file stolen from the armory. The gunnery sergeant overhauled his ordnance, and the property-sergeant struck up field-equipment. The commander and his heads of department held conferences all over the place, and the ensigns of the landing force feverishly refreshed their minds from the Army Training Manual.

Three hundred miles north, at Puerto Dios, a nervous consul, having sent frantic radios to everybody he could think of, called on God, wished poignantly that he had taken up the ministry instead of the consular profession, and turned again to his charts and mileage tables, sweating profusely all over the consular stationery. For General Sangrado was coming down from the mountains—General Sangrado, the liberator, with the Army of Liberation, its appetite whetted with the loot of the capital. The general's manifestos sped before him like leaves before the gale. Several of these interesting documents lay on the consul's desk, flung there by certain heads of government, who had come with lamentable cries to take refuge in the consul's cellar, and firmly refused to take

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refuge anywhere else. Like Themistocles, or whoever it was, they said they sought sanctuary under the aegis of the great Republic of the North. The consul reread a manifesto in which General Sangrado described himself as the Scourge of God, and mentioned particularly his methods with the corrupt and unspeakable minions of envious foreign nations, who polluted the sacred soil of the mother land by their robberies, and shielded traitors from justice. It was, the consul reflected, especially unfortunate that the captain-general, Angel Beau-crucis, whose federal army had been driven out of the capital, was at that minute hiding on the premises. The captain-general's federal army was also in town, assuaging its bruised honor with the rum of the country, having, as General Sangrado so strikingly put it, been scattered in ignoble confusion, like buzzards when the eagle of the mountain swoops. This did not help. To cap it all, the consular doors were continually bursting open to admit emphatic creatures of the Fruit Company, who told the consul that something must be done: get the United States fleet down here. If not, letters will be written to Washington. And talked a lot of wash about supine and incompetent political job-holders.

"Job-holders!" reflected the consul bitterly. Anybody could have his job for two cents Mex. This was the third time the country had been liberated

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in a year and a half. You got tired of it. The last time, an elegant parlor piece he'd brought down from Iowa—stuffed scarlet tanagers, under glass—had been quite ruined by a stray bullet. And the time before that, a liberator had run off with the consul's pigskin puttees and portable typewriter. The consul calculated, for the fourth time, the sea miles from Balboa to Puerto Dios.

Meanwhile, the flag-ship was standing out to sea. The chief had lit off every can; the black gang was set for watch and watch. All the hands whose duties permitted were gathered on the fo'c's'le, Mike, emerged from his *cafard*, among them, where the ship's singer, his brown throat bare, sang a song he'd made to the tune of "Spanish Ladies":

"Farewell and adieu to you, Panama Mammas—
Farewell and adieu to you, Balboa janes——"

"Expedite," the radio said. Good enough; the old flag-ship had exceeded her designed speed in her first fight, when she expedited to get a shot at Cervera, the time that valiant man of Spain came out of Santiago to be sunk. And now her veteran engines again dug up extra knots—ten—twelve—even to nineteen she mounted; then settled to a steady eighteen knots and held on with a white bone in her teeth across the blue sea, so that her mud-hook rumbled down off Puerto Dios just after midnight some twenty hours later. The town was, for

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the most part, dark; nothing seemed to be afire. The Fruit Company's radio had communicated that General Sangrado planned to attack the next morning; he was bivouacking at the foot of the hills, inland. The consul, who came off in a shore-boat and climbed the sea-ladder like a cat, confirmed all this and said he thanked God for the navy. The landing force embarked, and went ashore to get between the liberator and the town.

Puerto Dios is on a point, very pretty as you come in from sea—low red roofs and pastel-tinted walls, seen through the palms, and a sea-wall the *Conquistadores* built, where white surf makes eternal agitation. The railroad to the capital follows the old *Camino Real*, passing inland behind a ridge that starts out of town and angles away from the sea. This country beyond the ridge is covered with palmetto scrub; the Fruit Company's limitless plantations run the other way, up the coast. The landing force, five companies and the artillery section, felt its way through the dark to the beginning of the ridge, and filed along it to position, its right on the road, and the Marines extending the left.

It is not easy to take position at night on a terrain you have never seen, guided by a doubtful map and a Jamaican consular clerk who fancied that General Sangrado was twelve feet high and ate nigger babies. The landing force swore as spiny

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plants pricked their knees and mosquitoes got home on their hot necks, but they took up their ground. Inland from the ridge they could see a great many twinkling lights; the Jamaican said these were the camp-fires of the Army of Liberation. The Marines, who had the best view, watched them hopefully. "Reckon those birds'll fight?—" "Well, if they don't find out it's us, they may give us a shot . . . no such luck, though." "Aw, they might—at ten to one, if they thought we had our pants down—but they don't fight—" "Well, how come the captain is rammin' us around in the dark, this away—why don't we wait?" "Shucks! He never fought anybody but the Germans and people like that. This war's diff'runt. . . ." "Pipe down, you animals—" "Automatic rifles—Aye, aye, sir!" "Mike's up forward—Sergeant Hughes is carryin' him——"

As well as he could in the dark, the captain sited his line and noted that the lights over yonder were going out. Nearly dawn; stars were getting pale; the air was gray with dawn. As the country revealed itself, he was concerned about his left—"No such luck as their fightin'—but in case they do—mustn't miss a chance . . . have to get my flank on some thing. . . . Consul says this San-grado has a very smart German—ex-officer—with him. . . . That scrub forward—that's the way they'll come, if there's one savvy soldier among 'em—not

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by the road—Corporal Snair! take your squad and cover the front of the company—extend a little past my left—go a hundred yards or so from the foot of the ridge and see if anything's comin'. If they do come along, fall back on me, keepin' contact. If they are too close, file around the left—I'll watch for you. And report back!" Himself, he took his bugler, and went along the ridge beyond the flank.

The light was strengthening; the sky glowed like an opal. The captain ran over his orders as he walked: "This is not punitive; it's entirely to maintain peace and protect lives and property in Puerto Dios. You are not to fire unless fired on, and then only in self-defense. You will not advance beyond this ridge. We are not taking sides with anybody—they can fight all they want to outside of Puerto Dios, but they can't fight there!" "Huh! Liable to run on us here, unbeknown-like, and somebody will get hurt. Nice position, though—Hi! Music, is that a ravine yonder?"

It was a ravine, starting near the top of the ridge and cutting back toward the sea. "Rest my flank on that— Music! beat it back to the gunnery-sergeant and tell him to bring his guns up here—on the double! Then tell Mr. Godby to extend the infantry platoon until he connects with me—" The music galloped off, and the captain lit a cigarette and studied the lie of the land.

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Down in the palmetto scrub, at the foot of the ridge, he heard movement. That would be the left-flank man; he started down toward it. Then there was a lot of movement—several men— “Corporal must have met somethin’. That’s a whole squad—filin’ left—” There was a high Latin shout, and a shot—a Mauser! A spatter of shots, and the unmistakable answer of a Springfield. More shooting: a dog—Mike, surely—barked. The captain ran toward it, his pistol out. German fellow had his points forward, like a sensible man. The captain came upon a marine, behind a palmetto; the man, his shoulder against the trunk, was striving desperately to straighten his sagging knees and get his rifle up—you could see his back-muscles strain, and there was a bright stain, widening, on his shirt. As the captain reached him, his knees gave way, and he dived on his face. Ahead the scrub cleared a little, and, beyond, straw sombreros bobbed among the fronds, and rifles flashed; the tang of smokeless powder caught your nose. The captain considered that he could not be sure with his gat. He returned it, picked up the Springfield, and emptied the magazine, squeezing off every shot. There were screams and a groan, and a receding trampling. He was aware of Private Mike, his four legs planted, his little black face quite furious. Laboring—it is no light matter for a 150-pound man to get another, quite as heavy, on

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his back and walk up-hill—he hauled his marine across his shoulders some way, caught up the rifle, and started back. It was not pleasant. A great many rifles seemed to be attending him, and he couldn't run. But the palmetto was some cover, and he noted with satisfaction that none of the shots came from this side of the place where a man still screamed in a curious choked voice. "Damn it, in a war I'd get a Medal of Honor for this. Now nobody will see me, and if they did, it ain't a war, anyhow!" He reached the shelter of the crest, eased his man down, and felt with practised fingers. "Raked his lungs—high. Hell! The bird's dead!" He looked anxiously toward the centre—out farther than he thought—there they were, coming on the run. "Here you are, sergeant! Get into battery right here. Lay number one on that road, and number two—about eleven o'clock—range 250——"

The naval officer commanding came now, on the skyline with a commandeered horse. "What force they got? Get anybody? Can't see a thing from the right!——"

"Quite a few in the scrub, sir. Got one of my outposts. Mind yourself, sir—shooting at you——"

"Mind, yourself! They shoot first? Go on—rake out that scrub a little—got to attract their at-

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tention. . . .” And the heavy Brownings came into action——

The rest was without incident. The German fellow knew at once it wasn't the federals, and bade good-by to the Minister of War's portfolio that he had counted on. Presently a fussed and perspiring Scourge of God came in under a white flag as big as a table-cloth to get his instructions. He protested, at length and with tears; but from the ridge he saw the flag-ship lying off, all her guns trained out; and three hundred bluejackets and Marines watched him with wistful faces, like a cat looks at a canary bird. So he agreed to take his war up another alley. And that was that.

The captain sat on a rock among his Marines to watch the Army of Liberation file off toward the hills, and a damp, velvety muzzle came poking into his hand. Later, all things having been made peaceful, the landing force took the seaward road. Up forward the Marines stepped out, heads up, shoulders back, and pieces dressed, with just the touch of swank a crack flag-ship guard ought to show; and a whisper passed down from the front: “Say—say—d'yuh see it? Private Mike's back on his own station again!” Nobody stretched a neck to see—that wasn't discipline, but the company wise-guy in the last squad said, out of the corner of his mouth: “What did I tell you? Dawgs has

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instincts about these things. And Bozo, he knew the skipper before. He said, this skipper Jack—"Silence in ranks, you!"

Puerto Dios observed, leading the column, a little black dog—an elegant, ebony little dog, with his head high and his tail curled in an arrogant three-quarter circle over his stern, who now and then dropped back to jump at his captain's hand.

THE DEVIL MAN ¹

By HORACE MCCOY

THERE is a legend in the South Pacific that only white men who have renounced race, religion and creed ever reach the island of Sajkrii, whose coral reefs are washed on the north by the Sea of China and on the south by the Sea of Java. White men there were who had come to Sajkrii but they had departed almost before the shifting of the tides.

They could not stand the sullen gloom of the blood-sweating nights or the grotesque chants from jungle and swamp. Great frogs boomed in macabre hollowness; horribly formed *pometerns*, looking like prehistoric insects, but no more fatal than wasps, swayed in the copper moonlight; radiantly plumaged birds rose from the low-hanging trees that brought darkness when it was but twilight.

White men there were who had come to Sajkrii, and gone. One night had been enough.

Yet there was one who had come and stayed on. A big man he was, slender and tall and keen, of

¹ From *Black Mask*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

enormous physical strength. His weather-beaten face had been burned to a mahogany brown by the suns of the world, and his eyes were gray and glinted like burnished steel.

One day he had sailed through the Karimata Straits into an atoll at Sajkrii. Within a week he had erected a crude dwelling place so close to the shores the slow rollers broke almost against his porch. For days he would be there and for days he would be gone; no one knew where. In the fleeting splendor of an equatorial dawn he would climb into his little boat, his bronzed torso naked to the waist, and vanish into the lifting shadows—a mystery.

Once upon a time he had had a race, a religion, and a creed; he had been devoted to a comrade. He had loved him with the profoundness of men who together challenge destiny in curious corners of the world. Deception was the man's true name. It had taken him a long time to find that out. Then race, religion and creed he had torn from him in a single bitter gesture. He circumnavigated the globe. He went on immense ships of steam and on queer little sailers, seeking a roar that would rise above and drown out the rebellious clamoring of his own soul.

And then finally he had come to South Borneo, to Banjermasin, and the white mists; and he had dropped his anchor. That was three years ago.

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Now he was known throughout the islands as the greatest sailor in the archipelago. When barometers fell, and mariners skilled in handling boats in the catastrophic abruptness of tropical storms sought any harbor's shelter, he would get aboard his tiny schooner and head into the boiling waves. And always he returned.

They called him the Devil Man.

His strangeness was whispered in the island ports and the receptive ears of Jules Rivière heard. It was his business to hear and know. In his little shop at Banka, where he bargained with the natives during the day and did—God knows what!—in the night, Rivière had heard.

He had heard that a giant of a man had come out of the purple sea to live at Sajkrii; that his mode of existence was unknown, and that the natives held him in profound awe. Jules Rivière's brain told him that mystery in these islands meant one of two things—pearls or prisons; and a string of pearls was a fetish to Jules Rivière. He came to investigate.

He found the Devil Man on his narrow porch, his eyes glued to a thin wisp of smoke that hung on the rim of the world—the farewell of the Royal Mail.

Rivière approached unheard. "Gets you, doesn't it?" he said.

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The man shifted his eyes and stared coldly at the fat intruder.

"Who are you?" he demanded quietly.

"An ambassador of peace," Rivière replied, and laughed shortly.

"Peace," came the same monotone, "needs no ambassadors. What do you want?"

He had turned now. His shirt was open to the waist, revealing his massive chest. Enormous power, thought Rivière; those arms might crush him in a single embrace. But he laughed again, that staccato, unnatural outburst, and sat down. He had been in the islands too long to fear physical danger at the hands of these men of mystery. Always they had tales; always they wanted to tell them. Jules Rivière knew.

"I'm over at Banka," he said finally. "Copra mostly, but sometimes—pearls." His words were even and smooth. "I thought perhaps you would like to help me in my business."

"You sailed fifty miles to say that—you, the only pearl poacher in the islands?" The Devil Man shook his head. "That's not the reason. Why are you here?"

Rivière's eyes lighted at the insult and he flushed uncomfortably, yet he spoke.

"That is it," he persisted. "Away to the north"—his voice became a whisper—"there are rich fisheries. Little men and little boats and *big* pearls.

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You and I might join in collecting a treasure, my friend——”

“How?”

“Perhaps . . .” Rivière drew his stubby fingers across his oily throat and made a hissing sound.

The Devil Man clenched his fists and the veins in his forehead bulged.

“Go!” he thundered.

Rivière purpled with impotent rage, and his voice was strained.

“*C’est bien!* But some day you will change your mind. . . .”

“GO!”

A week later a tiny boat sailed through the harbor at Banka and tied up beside a steel-skinned liner from the North. A man leaped on to the quay and crossed the wide street, to disappear behind the torn screen door of Jules Rivière’s shop.

Rivière grinned when the man entered. He knew the islands; knew he would come. One had only to be patient.

“I have copra to sell,” the visitor began.

Rivière shook his head tragically. “I am sorry, my friend,” he said poignantly. “I cannot buy. Look!” He pointed to the yard behind his shop where great heaps of copra lay drying in the sun. “Perhaps you have something else?”

“No,” the man said as he moved to go. “When I’ve been in these islands long enough to mammy

palaver and slit a nigger's throat and take his pearls, I'll come back!"

"Wait!" Rivière touched his arm. He saw the brightest prospect of his varied career fading; a wild ambition crumbling. Soon this man would be ready for anything. . . .

"We shall drink!" He clapped his hands and from somewhere in the fetid darkness a native boy appeared, and leered apologetically as he sheathed his knife. Plainly his master took no chances. "*Pernoud!*" Rivière told him, and turned to the stairs. "It is cooler," he said, "up there."

The Devil Man found a chair that once had been upholstered and he sank into it and luxuriously extended his long legs. He drank slowly and, for the first time in years, permitted himself the luxury of a smile.

"What is your name?" Rivière asked.

"What's a name more or less in this limbo of wickedness?" the man countered. "Say—Crenshaw."

Rivière rolled the name over the tip of his tongue. "Crenshaw . . . Crenshaw. . . . Um-m-m-m-m. . . . Sounds decent; not too decent, though. Ever do any pearl diving . . . know anything about them?"

"A little—to both questions," the man replied.

"There is a chest in these islands," Rivière said softly, "that contains the rarest set of pearls—per-

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fectly matched pearls—the world ever saw. Now a man who is big and strong and hell-careless might. . . .”

The tinkle of the Devil Man’s glass as it crashed on the floor interrupted the trader.

“What the hell are you driving at, Rivière?”

Rivière gestured impatiently.

“Three years you’ve been in these islands,” he said, “most of them on Sajkrii. No use getting offended—three years on Sajkrii will do one of two things to a white man: they’ll either kill him or they’ll make a nigger out of him. And a nigger shouldn’t be so damn scrupulous about a little thing like——”

“Stop!” Crenshaw’s voice filled the room with its terrifying volume.

“Then,” Rivière cried defiantly, “what are you doing down here if not to poach pearls? You can’t make a living out of copra—even the niggers can’t do that!”

“I’m waiting,” Crenshaw said soberly, his emotions under control. “I’m waiting on a man.”

After that there were many meetings and many drinks, just as Rivière knew there would be. He wanted to hear Crenshaw’s story, not because it was just another story, for they were all alike; he wanted the story because he wanted Crenshaw. And he thought it would give him the hold by which he could get him.

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The Devil Man told the story. It began on a sloop in Dutch East India.

Down to Balanipa, where all the scum of the Pacific float, had come Crenshaw, the son of a college professor and an artistic mother. From the blue skies, apparently, Crenshaw had plucked a wild, wild strain and transplanted it in his conventional breast. It had taken some mighty fanning to make that flame take hold, but when it did it leaped forth to claim him, body and soul, for the four winds of the earth. He had come to Balanipa a step ahead of the police, and there he had met Wimmer.

The first time he saw Wimmer was in a waterfront saloon. Back over a table he was bent, his feet dangling, his throat in the iron grip of a barbaric nomad of the sea who scorned the use of a knife on such a physical specimen.

A minute longer and Wimmer would have died. Crenshaw's mighty hands snapped the assailant's neck, and, in a swift stride he had gathered the unconscious little man under his arm and retreated. Through the side door he stumbled, he knew not where.

But the fortunes which see after wastrels had brought them to the dock where a tramp was casting off. Crenshaw dashed across the plank, half-

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dragging the inert form, and paused sharply before the first officer.

"Lay to there!" he bellowed furiously. "What the ——— is this all about?"

Crenshaw let Wimmer sink to the deck, and drew himself up to his full height.

"Listen to me, you Bintu ape!" he roared. "You're not the only mate who's ever used a sweat-rag for a mains'l. Lower your voice or I'll nail your gizzard to the fo'mast!"

A glimmer of respect showed in the officer's eyes and he stood there silently inspecting the strange cargo that had shipped on, with his bowlegs braced to the swing of the vessel—the deep-water twister, with his long arms and his great chest, and the senseless form of the man on the deck, fit to be only a mess kid. And then he laughed loudly.

"We're in something of a hurry," Crenshaw said.

"I can use ye," the officer said. "There's been a seamen's strike affecting all craft outta Australia—and we gotta quick turn-around, mister. Get for'ard!"

Thus Crenshaw and Wimmer cleared the Celebes coast and logged a steady eleven knots toward the North.

They were a strange pair; the one from gentility, the other the dwarfed offspring of a West Indies mother and a British navigator; the one big

and powerful, the other pitifully weak and undersized. Perhaps the very fierceness of the contrast welded the comradeship. Wimmer's affection might be explained in the prodigiousness of Crenshaw's strength and mind; in these he might have been irresistibly drawn by the echoes of an unrealized, impossible ambition. But Crenshaw's fondness for the furtive Wimmer was well-nigh inexplicable. Perhaps he was drawn by all the evil he unconsciously felt; in Wimmer he found the personification of a strain he lacked the courage to develop.

To the top of the world and to the bottom of the world they sailed, Crenshaw and Wimmer, the Devil Man and the Dwarf.

Every port down under knew them; crews recited vivid accounts of the drink-mad Wimmer, who amused himself by scattering native bazaars over the streets, sure of his protection under the mighty arm of the giant Crenshaw.

And of Crenshaw who, in the midst of a screaming snowstorm and a blinding no'easter, walked about the sloshing decks, when gunwales rolled under, with his great chest and arms bare, oblivious to the tempest that raged around him.

Then an assassin's revolver cracked at Sarajevo and the smoldering world burst into flame. It touched Crenshaw and Wimmer, and burned them,

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far down in the Molucca Sea. The Great Adventure!

The Big Show was on!

And Crenshaw and Wimmer went, and were never separated; and they went through the mud of the centres of mobilization; and the advance sector into the lines.

A gray, chilling, soaking rain. The acrid smell of weather-wet explosives. Twisted barbed-wire and gaping shell holes. Men lying dead. British and French and Americans and Negroes; side by side. Massive shells dropping from skies reluctant to turn them loose.

Bl-l-oom! Bl-l-oom!

Private Crenshaw stared down at the mud. One was alive—he groaned! Private Crenshaw couldn't make out. Enemy?

He looked down his barrel, across the dull bayonet.

“Up, swine!”

A lean, harried, blood-smeared face.

Wimmer!

“God!” Private Crenshaw muttered. “Just in time!”

Weeks in a gloomy hospital. Convalescence. Duty.

* * * *

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They sat outside a demolished house. Dead men lay around them. Private Wimmer shivered and looked where rifle fire spattered. He clutched Private Crenshaw's arm.

Fear!

It cried out to him from the shadows of the hill, where men were lying in wait for each other pouring flaming lead into each other's bodies.

"Twice!" he whispered, gasping. "Twice! I owe you two lives now!"

Private Crenshaw chuckled. "Forget it, you twisted truck of a wild brood. You poor little devil!"

Private Crenshaw hugged him fondly.

"Twice!" Private Wimmer echoed.

"Forget it!"

They looked into each other's eyes, the Devil Man and the Dwarf; they understood. Do women love like that?

Rain. Rain. Rain.

It'd be sticky in the trenches tonight.

Whiz-z-z-z-z-bang!

Private Wimmer's hand dropped to his belt, where a knife had always been sheathed.

"Gawd!" he whimpered. "Them things! Gawd!"

From beyond Montfaucon the rise and fall of gunfire.

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Crr-r-r-r-ack! Crr-r-r-r-ack! Crack-crack-crack!

Rhythm! Music! Who was wielding the baton this night? wondered Private Crenshaw.

Ker-slosh, ker-slosh, ker-slosh!

Moving in!

* * * * *

In!

No smoking. No talking. No—*nothing!*

Private Wimmer tugging at his boots. The hollow suction.

The age-long wait for the hour.

“Gawd!” muttered Private Wimmer. “Who th’ hell is running this army? Did we come up here to fight, or did we come up here to stand in this lousy mud?” His voice became a whimper. “Why can’t we go over?”

He raised his head above the firing step and peered into the night. There were mounds all around out there . . . his brain wondered what they were . . . what were they lurking out there in the grayness . . . if he screamed would they leap at him? . . . *Mounds* . . . They were dead men! . . . All puffed up . . . Funny how dead men looked in misting twilight . . .

Someone touched him in the back. The corporal.

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"Hey, you!" he whispered. "Keep 'at head down!"

Private Wimmer laughed shrilly. "Why th' hell don't you turn us loose?" he screamed. "I ain't afraid like you yellow-bellied sea dogs . . . It's killin' me, this waiting! I'll go it alone, I will—" He clambered up and caught the top of the trench with his tiny fingers.

The corporal's gun gleamed in a semi-circle as he swung for Private Wimmer's head.

Kr-rump!

Private Wimmer groaned and collapsed. The corporal grinned and turned to Private Crenshaw.

"He busted under the strain," he said laconically. "You understan'? If them damn Krauts hear us . . ."

Private Crenshaw dropped beside the body and doused his bleeding head.

"Hey, you!" the corporal hissed. "Don't use 'at water! S'pose we gets cut off?"

"Get the hell up the line!" Private Crenshaw snarled. "It's my water and my buddy!"

* * * * *

An *estaminet*. The corporal who had struck Private Wimmer in line of duty. Was it ten Jerry prisoners—or a dozen? citation for that. Resourceful, aggressive, that non-com.

Private Wimmer creeping into a shell-swept

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house across the road. His tiny eyes blazing with hatred.

Bang!

The deafening roar of a rifle. The corporal staggers and weaves in the street like a flower whose stem is broken. Blood gushing from his back. It looked black against the background of olive drab.

The court-martial. Privates Crenshaw and Wimmer before the stern adjutants—the high tribunal.

“Quiet now!” Private Crenshaw murmured. “I’ll lie us out of it some way. Don’t bust!”

The dull eyes of the adjutant-general. And his cracking voice.

“Which of you two murdered that corporal?”

Private Crenshaw rubbed his eyes. “Neither, sir,” he said. “We were asleep . . . tired out . . . We were in for sixty hours. . . .”

Private Wimmer laughed insanely.

“*Crenshaw!*” He shrieked it. “*Crenshaw! I saw him do it!*”

“Yes?” said Jules Rivière.

“They sentenced me to the firing squad,” Crenshaw said. “But they waited too long to execute me. I tore down the gate with my bare hands. . . . They couldn’t hold me. Some day he’ll come along and . . .”

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"Impossible!" Rivière exclaimed. "How do you know he's living?"

"Because," Crenshaw said simply, "God's too good to let him die without seeing me first."

"But think, man, if we could get those pearls you'd have enough to look . . ."

His voice beat upon empty air. Crenshaw had moved away.

It was a night three months later. A storm, the grandfather of all the storms, had been born in the Indian Ocean and swept through the Malay Straits to New Guinea and the Pacific. The waves lashed about Crenshaw's place, and sprinkled into the room where he sat in the flickering yellow light. Dread-bolted thunder reverberated and lemon lightning flashed.

The rank desolation was bridling him. The veneer of civilization was about to fall. He saw his hairy chest through his open singlet, and the black skin. He stretched forth his hand. Black! Was he turning nigger?

He longed, intensely, furiously, for home.

Parrots cried aloud in fright and scampered over the roof, drawn by the alluring light. The great frogs droned their peril. The shrill chatterings of the birds sounded vault-like.

"This is hell for sure," he croaked. "It looks like God is sore at the whole world again!"

There was a noise at the door, and he whirled

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quickly. Then he laughed. Some stray bird seeking shelter.

"Damn!" he muttered. "It's getting *me* now!"

The noise, more impatient than before, was repeated. He listened closely. It was a knock. A knock at that door on such a night? Impossible! He unsheathed his knife and flung it open. It was Rivière.

"*Bon Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "We just did make it!"

He entered with a man, a little man whose face was covered with beard that gave him the look of a stunted tree, animate in defiance of all harmony.

Crenshaw swore a terrible oath. "You! *Wimmer!*"

The little man's mouth flew open, but he could not speak.

Rivière's head bobbed furiously. "I brought him. He's yours if you come to terms with me. . . ."

Wimmer regained his tongue and a knife glinted in the dim light. He turned on the fat Frenchman.

"You Judas!" he screamed.

But Crenshaw was quicker. The knife clattered on the floor.

"Now," Crenshaw hissed, "the death celebration. You owe me three lives, Wimmer; I'm going to take one. First, a drink! Rivière, under the front

porch you will find a cache of liquor. Fetch some!"

As Rivière went through the door the wind blew in, and the light flickered. He pulled it shut quickly, but not quickly enough to exclude a winged insect as large as a human hand as it droned into the shelter of a roof. Its long proboscis trembled convulsively. It was armored and its eyes were vivid red. It circled the room and lighted on Wimmer's arm. It blinked its eyes and Wimmer stared in horror as the red faded and was replaced by bright green.

He screamed pitifully and leaped from the chair, brushing the thing from him in a mad gesture, breaking a wing. The insect boomed as its armored body struck the floor; it droned and blinked its frightful eyes as it tried to rise; then it arched its back in a terrible convulsion and crawled about the floor.

"The *pometern!*" Crenshaw cried, "I've been cheated!"

A red welt appeared on Wimmer's arm where the insect had stung him. He clutched the table for support.

"In two minutes," Crenshaw bellowed, "you'll be dead! There is no remedy! You'll twist into a knot and you'll draw up and you'll suffer . . . and I wanted to kill you myself. . . ."

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Wimmer clucked and pitched forward on his head.

The door opened and Rivière appeared with the bottle. "Fine thing for a night like this," he said. "It's—" His eyes found the body.

"You have killed him already!" he gasped.

Crenshaw laughed. "No," he said. He pointed to the monstrosity that bumped about the floor.

"*That?* Why," and Rivière laughed, "that does not kill. In an hour the sting is gone! Too many times have I been stung not to know. You are making jest with me."

Crenshaw shook his head. "You're right and I'm right. But the point is—*he thought it killed him!* He expected me to kill him some day, and he was afraid of death!"

Rivière gulped a drink. "And now I shall tell you how to get the pearls. . . ."

The waves roared. Crenshaw heard, absorbed, and towered above everything in the room. He cried joyously with the realization that his bond was loosed, and dashed to the door.

"I'm going home!" he screamed, and rushed into the night.

Rivière flung open the door. "The storm!" he called. "It will kill you. Wait!" His voice was lost in the roar of waves and wind and rain.

He saw Crenshaw leap into his little boat and

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hoist the sail. He raised his eyes in prayer as the hurricane filled the canvas and snatched the frail boat into the maelstrom.

A huge green wall of water rose between them.

"Crenshaw!" he implored. "Crenshaw!"

But the Devil Man had gone.

HIGH WATER ¹

By A. W. SOMERVILLE

Two long-limbed, slovenly-clothed, dirty-faced and unshaven telegraph men waded through a foot or more of water to the business car. They halted below the observation platform, in the drizzle and mud and water, and held a consultation.

"You got the most education," said the chief; "I'll let you tell him."

"He might not believe me," demurred his assistant, "and I wouldn't think of assuming so much authority, besides. You tell him and I'll stand right behind you, near the door."

"When I start to leave," warned the chief, "don't get in my way. I might wanta hurry." They entered the business car. A negro porter appeared. "Where's the Old Man?" demanded the chief.

"Mistah Childress jes' now wen' to bed," objected the porter. "He done been up all night, las' three nights. You gen'mun bes' wait till he get up."

"You go tell him," said the chief telegraph man

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heartlessly, "that the wires are down between Adelaide and Cloudy Bend, and that we wanta know what he wants to do about it."

"Ah don' think it am advisable," objected the negro politely. "Yuh see, Mistah Childress he done tol' me profoun'ly not tuh wake him up 'foh suppah lessen it am a emergency."

"This," mimicked the chief, "am a emergency, see? Go get him up. And where," continued the chief, "do you keep the hot coffee, Dudley?"

"Yes-suh," said Dudley, "got plenty hot coffee. Right this way, suh."

He showed the way respectfully. The two telegraph men were served two steaming cups of black coffee and two thick sandwiches. They ate with big bites and drank in noisy gulps.

"Go wake Mr. Childress," ordered the chief.

"Ef yuh insists," said the porter, "Ah'll go get him up. Ah'll say Mistah Allbright he says de wires is down 'tween Adelaide an' Cloudy Bend, an' what mus' he do—am that right?"

"That am right," assented Allbright. "Hurry up!"

Dudley departed on his mission. A moment later a growl was heard from one of the state-rooms, followed shortly by a bellow. Dudley emerged with a wrinkled forehead and a meek but injured look in his eyes.

"De boss am sure mad," he confided. "He say

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somethin' about puttin' wires up. Heah he come!" Dudley disappeared toward the kitchen.

Mr. Childress stalked up. He ignored the telegraph men. "Dudley!" he bawled. He waited one-tenth of a half second. "Dudley!" he bawled again. He waited one-twentieth of a half second. "Where is that black scoundrel?" he demanded of no one in particular.

Dudley stuck his head unobtrusively around a corner.

"So there you are!" bawled the Old Man. "Do I have to wait all day for a cup of coffee? Everybody else around here gets coffee. Don't I get any? You got any more coffee?"

"Yes-suh," declared Dudley seriously.

"Well, don't stand there all day and talk about it!" shouted Childress. "Get me some!" Childress turned to Allbright. "What's the matter with your lousy wire?" he demanded.

"It's down," said Allbright briefly, "between Adelaide and Cloudy Bend."

"Put it up," said Childress ungraciously. Allbright grinned. "What're you laughin' at?" demanded the Old Man.

Allbright became serious. "The poles are twenty to twenty-five feet from the dump, some of 'em further," he answered. "We'll never get some of 'em up till the water goes down."

Dudley arrived with the coffee. Childress seized

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the cup, took a hefty swig, nearly burned the lining out of his throat. He glared at the retreating Dudley, took another swig.

"Why come an' tell me about it?" he snarled at the electrical men. "Go put something up—get us through somehow—that's what you're here for."

"We haven't any wire," replied the ill-smelling Allbright. He didn't smell any worse than the weary-eyed Childress; the business car *in toto* smelled like a wet pigsty. Business cars smell that way when the worn-out occupants flop down for a thirty-minute nap in soggy clothes covered to the belt line with mud and slime, when refugees from the high waters are given coffee, food and shelter until they can be got to safety.

"Haven't any wire?" demanded Childress crossly.

"No, sir," responded Allbright. "Used up the last we had today at noon running a line over to the telephone company to keep the line open through Ravenhead."

"How much wire you gotta have?"

"They're salvagin' what they can," answered Allbright, "but it's slow work. We lost sixteen thousand feet."

"What?" shouted Childress.

"Sixteen thousand feet," said the man gloomily. "Half of it's under water."

Childress drummed on the table before him. He

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sat down, shoved the coffee cup out of the way. He scratched several places that itched. Suddenly he raised his head sharply.

"Didn't we send about forty rolls down here for replacement on the branch?" he demanded suddenly. Allbright nodded. "Well, where is it?" came the aggressive demand.

Allbright said something about forty feet of water. A short fat man had entered and stood gulping down a sandwich as though he never expected to see food again. He was T. P. Patchbolt, division master mechanic. His bright blue eyes took in everything.

"Damn the water!" shouted Childress. "Here we got a million miles of drawn copper an' you holler for wire! You'd think it was ten feet of baling wire. Are ye afraid to get wet?"

"Listen, boss—" began the electrician.

"Listen, hell!" stormed the official. "Go get me that wire!"

"Listen, boss—" began the man again desperately.

"I'll listen to nothing!" answered the weary-eyed official. "You get that wire an' I'll listen to you. Understand? G'wan!"

The two telegraph men slouched out. Patchbolt started to follow them.

"Wait a minute, T. P.," said Childress. "I wanta talk to you."

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The fat man waved his hand. "I'll be back in two shakes," he declared. He joined the two men out in the drizzle. "The boss sounded like he was mad," he observed. The two men snorted. "Would you like to get the wire now," said T. P., "or would you sooner wait till it stops raining?"

"A government dredge couldn't get that wire out," said the younger of the telegraph men, named Carter. "The storeroom's forty feet under water, an' the storeroom's got a roof on it. A submarine might help."

"What's the idea in standin' out here in the rain?" demanded Allbright. "Let's get under cover."

"I know where there's some wire," said T. P. calmly.

"Lay off the humor," suggested Allbright.

"No foolin'," said T. P.

"Where?" demanded Allbright.

T. P. told them—down the branch on the cotton platform at Tudow—about Mile Post 4.

"You sure?"

"Positive," declared T. P. "Eight new rolls of wire. I was there when they stashed it."

"Let's get a boat," said Allbright.

"I gotta go back an' talk to the Old Man," said T. P. "You let me know how you come out."

"Sure will," declared Allbright. "Much obliged too."

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"Oh, don't mention it," said T. P. with a lordly gesture.

Allbright and Carter crossed the bridge, walked down the levee, came to the temporary wharf. There were two soldiers sitting in the comparative dryness of a rude shanty. Before the two soldiers were boats of all sizes and descriptions.

"Howdy," said Allbright.

"H'lo," said one of the soldiers suspiciously.

"We wanta get a motorboat," said Allbright. "We're railroad men. We gotta go down the Cad-jin Branch an' get some material."

"Do tell," said the soldier.

"No funny stuff," answered the tired railroader. "We gotta have a boat. If you can't let us have a motorboat, let us have anything—anything that'll float."

"Well, well," said the soldier, "did you hear him, Jake?" He spoke to the second soldier. "I do believe it's Mr. Hoover. And he wants a boat. I'm so sorry, Mr. Hoover, but the yacht just now broke a G string, an' Mr. Coolidge warned all of us personally not to let you take no chances. An important fellah like you oughtn't to take no chances. I'm so sorry, Herbert, but Mr. Coolidge would fire all of us if we let you take the yacht out when it's rainin' an' with a G string broke."

"Listen," said Allbright, "I wanta boat, see? I

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don't wanta argue about it—what I want is a boat."

"Herbert," chided the soldier, "you shouldn't be so venturesome."

"Maybe you don't understand," spoke up Carter. "We've got to get some wire up the branch, and the only way we can get up there is in a boat. We want that wire for our main line—we've got to have it."

"This must be Herbert's secretary," observed the second soldier.

"We gotta have a boat," said Allbright desperately. "You half-wits think this is a swell joke. Well, it ain't no joke. We gotta have a boat."

"Why, Herbert," soothed the first soldier, "how you do talk! Tut-tut!"

"Don't Herbert me!" exploded Allbright. "I want a boat, see?"

"On your way, bums," said the first soldier aggressively. "You nor nobody else gets a boat to go joy-ridin' in. Not with the levee about ready to come down around our ears."

The two boat seekers finally retreated to the bridge head and sat down. Allbright asked Carter if he had ever known a soldier who had any brains. Carter said he didn't care to know any well enough to find out.

T. P. came clumping down the track from the direction of the station. They hailed him.

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"I was lookin' for you," he said. "Get a boat?" They told him about the half-witted soldiers. "Yeah," said T. P. "Weather Bureau says she'll hit the top at six tonight. They commandeered everything, I guess. They wouldn't let Pershing have a canoe if he was here."

What could they do, demanded Allbright. T. P. fished a moldy cigar from his shapeless coat.

"Anybody got a dry match?" he asked. Allbright produced one from an old shotgun shell. "This cigar," said T. P., after much puffing and blowing, "don't seem to taste right."

Carter suggested that he squeeze the water out of it.

"This is one hell of a life," said T. P. moodily, looking glumly at the sad cigar.

"How we gonna get that wire?" demanded Allbright.

"I was just gonna suggest," said T. P., "that you boys come with me down the branch. I'm gonna take the 235 down there 's soon as she's hot."

Allbright and Carter gave him incredulous stares. "Say that again," said Carter.

"I'm gonna take the 235 down the branch," said T. P., "an' I'll take you two wire experts along with me if you wanta go—in about twenty minutes."

Allbright and Carter looked at each other. "I think he's crazy," said Allbright.

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"The strain's been too much for him," declared Carter.

"You're like a pair of old women," said T. P. "Now I'm goin' down the branch, an' what's more, I'm takin' a engine down there with me, an' I'm gonna bring out six box cars if I can, an' I don't know how many refugees on them box cars. While I was talkin' to the boss they phoned down from False River that a arryplane had seen 'em. So the boss says, 'T. P., we gotta get them people out.' An' I says, 'Boss, we sure gotta do that. But how we gonna do it?' I says. Then he says he wishes I wouldn't ask so many silly questions, but to see if I couldn't do somethin'. An' if I couldn't, to tell the soldiers down on the levee about it. So I went down an' told the nigger to get the 235 hot—she still had thirty pounds on her—an' I'm gonna hook a flat car behind her an' go down that branch. That's the dope. Now d'you wanta stay in good company?"

Neither of the men hesitated. "I'll go," said Carter.

"Me, too," said Allbright. "We've all gotta die some day."

"Fine!" said T. P. "We ain't gonna take no engine crew, no train crew. Ain't but one here—they need 'em here—an' I ain't got the gall to call a crew to go down that branch, nohow." They were

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walking down the track toward the station. They passed the station, came to the Y. Near the main-line switch stood the 235, a little ten-wheeled engine, a relic of better days. She was vomiting black smoke, with the blower kicking up an awful rumpus. The three men climbed into the shelter of the cab out of the drizzle.

The 235 was an oil burner. A negro sat on the left-hand side with one paw on the firing valve.

"What you tryin' to do, Jumbo—smoke up the parish?" demanded Patchbolt. "Get outta there an' let me fire this engine."

The negro slid off the seat hastily. T. P. adjusted the atomizer and cut down on the oil. There was one hundred and forty pounds of steam showing on the gauge.

"We'll go get some water," called T. P. to Carter. "Go let us out on the main line."

"Boss man," said Jumbo, "where is we gwine?"

"Goin' down the branch, Jumbo," answered T. P.

"De branch?" questioned Jumbo.

"The Cadjin Branch," answered T. P., reaching up and ringing the bell. He crossed over to the right-hand side and whipped two blasts out of the whistle. "Come here an' set her back for me," he ordered Jumbo.

They moved out on the main line, stopped.

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Carter threw the switch green, the negro threw the hand reverse forward for T. P. and they moved down to the water tank.

"Mistah Patchbolt," said Jumbo, "dis looks like a good place foh me to get off."

"You put some water in her," said T. P., "an' I don't much give a damn what you do. Get back there on the tank!"

The negro crawled back on the tank and helped T. P. spot for the spout. He then pulled the spout down over the manhole and yanked the valve open. T. P. found a piece of waste, pulled the oil-marker rod out of its slot, wiped it off, stuck it back down in the oil, pulled it into view again. It registered twenty-four hundred gallons.

"More than enough," he murmured.

A man in woebegone overalls came up the gangway. "Hello, Jim," said Patchbolt.

"Where you goin'?" demanded Jim.

"Down the branch," said T. P.

"What for?" asked the man.

"Refugees," answered the fat man.

"Oh," said Jim. He went over and motioned for Carter to get off the left-hand seat box. "I'll do the firin'," he said.

"We didn't call no crew," said T. P.

Jim shrugged. "I don't care," he said.

Jumbo came down from the tank above. "She's runnin' over," he reported.

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T. P. crossed over to the right-hand side, pulled on the whistle cord. They picked up a flat car on their way to the branch-line switch, hooked it onto the tank. Jumbo dropped off here. Jim, a fireman in regular service, was over on the left-hand side, firing the engine. They came to the branch switch, backing up with the flat car first. They would back up going down the branch; when they returned the engine would be going forward.

"See you later, Jim," called T. P., as they stopped at the switch. Carter swung down and went ahead to bend the rail.

"I think I'll stay with you," called Jim.

"You better stay here," answered the fat man. "I can make out all right. This ain't no regular call."

"That nigger can fire for Sam if I don't get back," answered the fireman, crossing over to the right-hand side. Carter had thrown the switch, the 235 moved off the main line, stopped in the clear.

"You understand," said T. P., "that you take your own chances. If the levee goes here, we're up the creek with no paddle. We go down as far as Sugarland if we can, an' there's two feet of water over the rails that I know of. There's about one chance in ten that we can get through."

"Sugarland," said the fireman—"that where the refugees are?"

"Supposed to be," answered Patchbolt. "The

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boss figures they were left-overs from the Raven-head crevasse."

The fireman nodded. "They can't stop us from tryin'," he said, and went back to the firing lever.

T. P. turned to Allbright. "Here's the dope," he said. "You an' your playmate go up on that flat car. You'll have to take turns walkin' ahead. Walk fast. If you get too tired, you let us know an' we'll try to help out. Jim here'll come up as soon as we see how she steams. I don't even know whether the dump's still here, but we'll find out in a few minutes."

Allbright climbed over the back of the tank, joined Carter on the flat car. Carter agreed to walk first. The engine backed up until the flat car came to the edge of the muddy water that hid the tracks, and Carter got off and walked up the flooded dump.

Ahead of them stretched a flat expanse of muddy water. Two feet under lay the branch-line dump and rails, and because of the danger of a washout that no one could possibly see, someone had to walk ahead of the train to make sure the engine and cars could pass over.

"Why don't you try to get those refugees out in a boat?" demanded Jim of T. P.

"It's forty miles around to Sugarland by boat," answered the fat master mechanic.

"Huh?"

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"You see," explained Patchbolt, "the only way to get in there is around by way of the river and down the crevasse at Ravenhead. Take a good boat to go down that crevasse. They can't follow our dump to Sugarland by boat on account of the old levee. We ain't in no danger unless the levee breaks in back of us; but, brother, if she comes through behind us, it's gonna be tough."

"No worse than some of 'em got," said the fireman somberly.

"That's true," admitted the fat man.

There was a steady swish-swish-swish of muddy water as they backed slowly down the branch. Both T. P. and Jim watched Carter closely. It wouldn't do to slip off the rails—it just wouldn't do. Although there was not more than two feet of water over the ties, it should not be forgotten that the dump was from eight to fifteen feet high. If the engine ever slid over the dump and lit in a soft spot, it would take a powerful lot of fishing even to find it, let alone rerail it. The branch line was built through a swamp.

Carter tired and Allbright took his place, and Carter came back to the cab to dry out. It was still raining—a cold, bone-chilling, spring drizzle. Allbright plodded along ahead of the little train.

After what seemed a long time, T. P. said: "You go up ahead, Jim. I can handle her; she's set about

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right." Jim climbed over the back of the tank, disappeared.

"Anything I can do, T. P.?" asked Carter.

"Yeah," said T. P., "get over on the left side an' watch those men up ahead. If any one of 'em says stop, holler your head off."

They went slopping through the water to the weak wuf-wuf-wuf of exhaust and the monotonous high-pitched roar of the blower. Allbright tired and they slowed, almost stopping, when the fireman took his place. Carter went back—or rather, ahead—to the flat car and Allbright came into the cab to dry out and get warm.

"Keep your eye on those men up ahead," ordered T. P.

They came to the cotton platform at Tudow, just past Mile Post 4, within the hour. The three men, Jim and Carter and Allbright, had taken turns walking ahead. All three were tired to almost utter weariness. None of them, including Patchbolt, could remember when a night of real sleep had been theirs. They were dirty of body and weary of eye.

Allbright was in the cab when they came to the cotton platform. "Let's stop an' put that wire aboard," he suggested.

"We'll pick it up comin' back," said T. P.

"Let's get it now," argued Allbright. "We may

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be drowned by the time we get back here. It'll be a supreme satisfaction just to get my paws on that wire."

Patchbolt grinned.

"All right," he agreed, "but throw your feet out. Go up an' tell Carter to bend that rail. We'll go right in the house track an' alongside the platform. Hurry it up!"

They moved very slowly onto the switch and into the house track.

"I'm a fool for doing this," muttered the fat man. "These lousy little house tracks wouldn't hold up a bag of beans. It won't hurt nothin', though, an' maybe it's a good hunch."

They oozed along the house track. All three men were wading through the water up ahead, checking up the track. The flat car came up even with the cotton platform, which stood well above the water. They stopped, spotted even with the little frame building at one end. T. P. cut his fire down and went up ahead to help.

Allbright kicked the padlocked door in with very few preliminaries. Allbright was a tough old veteran. The only job he had never tackled in the telegraph and telephone game was stringing submarine cable. Inside the shack they found eight rolls of wire—Number 9 copper wire, weighing two hundred and ten pounds to the roll and averaging

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about a mile in length. With the wire they found a pay-out reel. They loaded everything on the flat car.

They moved slowly back toward the branch main line, reached it without accident. Jim threw and locked the switch. Allbright went ahead, wading through the flood. Carter stayed on the flat car. Jim came up in the cab to dry out.

"It's only four more miles to the old levee and dry land," said T. P. "We'll be out of this slop from there till we get to Sugarland—I mean, jus' before we get to Sugarland. If those people are this side of Sugarland, we oughtta get 'em without no trouble."

"They won't be this side of Sugarland," said the fireman gloomily. "If they'd been this side, they'd of followed the dump back to the main line."

"Well," said T. P., "if they're below the old levee, I don't see how we can get to 'em. They tell me the Ravenhead crevasse cut a regular channel between the old levee an' Sugarland."

"That's what I heard," said the fireman moodily. The two men were silent for a moment. Finally Jim said, "We shouldda brought a boat."

"We couldn't get a boat," explained T. P. "Most all the boats went up to Ravenhead night before last when the levee busted there; what boats they got down around the bridge they won't part with. They think the levee's gonna go just east

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of the bridge, an' they're keepin' those boats to get the men out with."

Jim nodded gloomily. They slopped along through the dirty water.

"You live down here?" asked T. P.

"Yeah," said Jim shortly.

"Where?" asked the fat man.

"Just below Ravenhead," said Jim shortly.

"The hell!" said T. P. "Any of your people get caught?"

"I tried to find out," said Jim gloomily. "Nobody seemed to know. They took two relief trains out. I went through one of 'em—didn't see anybody. They may of been on the other one—I dunno."

"They?" questioned T. P.

"I'm a family man," said Jim gloomily.

They slowed, almost stopping, as Carter took Allbright's place in the lead. Jim went up ahead; Allbright came aboard shivering. The little ten-wheeler went slopping along. The three men changed places oftener now for the disagreeable task of wading ahead of the flat car. Carter was in the cab when they sighted dry land through the drizzling rain.

"That the old levee?" he called, pointing.

"That's it," said T. P. "It may not look like a monument, brother, but there's plenty of 'em down here that'd give a lot to be on it."

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"I guess that's so," agreed Carter.

They finally came to the levee. It was a tremendous relief to be able to see the rails again. Everybody came back to the cab. They would be on this comparatively high ground for eight miles, until they came to Sugarland. No one knew for certain what they would find at Sugarland, but everyone expected the worst.

T. P. was glad to cut the blower off; he was sick of hearing it. They were running fast enough now so the exhaust created enough draft to take care of the fire. T. P. held her with the independent air and worked a heavy throttle while Jim tossed four or five scoopfuls of sand into the fire box to clean out the flues. When they had been coming through the water the boot under the fire box had been covered, and the bottom air inlets of the fire pan might just as well not have been there. The little engine didn't seem to appreciate the treatment and it had been found necessary to smoke her heavy in order to get her to steam.

But they'd been lucky, thought the fat man, as they went rolling along—mighty lucky. If their luck held, they might get these refugees out. Rescue boats must have missed them. It might be that the rescue boats couldn't get to them. The flood did some funny things.

"How'd they know they was anybody out here?" shouted Allbright.

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"A arryplane saw 'em," answered the fat man.

"A arryplane," said Allbright. "H'm! So they fin'ly found a use for them things."

They came to the curve that led off the old levee onto the flats. There was a straightaway about a mile long before them, then nothing but water.

"I see something," called Carter. "Guess it must be the box cars."

When they came to the water's edge, all but T. P. were on the flat car. T. P. opened the whistle up for a long mournful bellow through the drizzling rain. The fat man left the air on service, methodically shut off the oil and the blower, left the atomizer barely cracked and clambered down. He proceeded to the flat car.

"Anybody on those cars?" he demanded, squinting through the rain.

"Somebody waved from up on top," declared Jim.

Over the yellow flood, slightly less than a half mile distant, could be discerned a short string of box cars. The fat man made out a figure on top the first of these cars. Near these cars was a small house, apparently turned over on its side. Beyond the box cars and the house, another half mile beyond, could be barely seen the refinery at Sugarland. The stack was easily visible, but little else.

"That's a woman on top that car," declared Carter.

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"I'm gonna walk down the dump," declared Jim excitedly, jumping off the flat car into the slop and the wet. Carter followed.

The fat man and Allbright watched the pair wade out along the dump. They advanced some fifty feet, when Jim, who was in the lead, suddenly dropped from sight. Carter pulled him back. The pair stood for a moment shouting, then turned and came back.

"No track," said Jim to T. P., looking down at the ground.

"Thought so," said the fat man.

"Strong current," supplemented Carter.

"We could hear 'em call," said Jim.

"Whose name were you yellin' out there?" asked the fat man.

The fireman hesitated. "That's my wife's name," he answered shortly.

"Wonder if his wife could be out there," thought the fat man. The flood did funny things. That was probably a woman on top that car. "They've been out in this hell for at least a night and a day," he thought. "They must have floated down on that house." Hello, there were two figures on top that car! Now there were three. One of 'em must be a kid.

"I can tell you what's happened," declared T. P. "The flood's cut the dump out between them and

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here, and it's cut it out between them an' Sugar-land. Those box cars are on a sort of island."

"How we gonna get 'em out?" demanded Jim.

"I can swim it easy," said Carter.

"He sure can," declared Albright; "he's a regular fish."

"That's a mean current," warned the fat man.

"I can make it easy," declared Carter.

T. P. was silent for a moment. "Could you take a wire across?" he demanded.

Carter grinned. "I'll give it a big try," he answered.

Albright slapped a heavy hand on a soggy thigh. "Here we go!" he cried.

Jim had been walking down to the deeper water. He returned. "Figure out a way?" he asked eagerly.

"Carter'll take a wire across," said T. P. "Says he can swim it."

"I can't swim," said Jim gloomily, as though accused.

T. P. clapped him on the shoulder. "That's all right, old-timer," he declared. They stood leaning up against the flat car. "Could you make out anything?"

"It looks like my house," declared Jim. "I won't leave here, Mr. Patchbolt, until we get 'em out."

"Don't you worry," said the master mechanic; "we'll get 'em out."

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Allbright and Carter had the pay-out reel on the track in front of them and had set a roll of wire on it.

"Don't let's get in too big a rush," said T. P. "We got to figure this thing out. That one wire ain't gonna get those people across. How stout is that wire, anyways?"

"We pull 'em up to four hundred pounds," answered Allbright promptly. "Four hundred pounds tensile strength. Got a big margin of safety too. If we hang five of these wires together, we can pull down a house."

"Let's get everything ready while we're all here," suggested T. P. "We ain't got but the one reel. It'll take a long time to unreel five of those rolls—six of 'em, if you count the one Carter's to take across."

"How d'you wanta do it?" demanded Allbright.

"If you think it'll work," said T. P., "we can anchor one end of the wire on the flat car and unreel it before you can bat an eye—run up the track about three-quarters of a mile. That's as long as they'll have to be."

Allbright grinned. "I never heard of no one unreeling telegraph wire with a locomotive before," he said, "but I'm willing to try it. Get up in the cab an' get ready; we're about all set."

T. P. clambered up in the cab and put a fire under the 235, and by the time he'd done that they

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were waiting on him. They had wrapped the free end of the wire around a stick, and Jim braced himself on the flat car and held this stick. Allbright and Carter held the reel and kept it running free, and they unreeled most of the first roll without a hitch. Allbright cut the wire when T. P. stopped on a hand signal, and they laid their product over to one side and stuck a fresh roll in the reel. Six times the 235 puffed up the track and returned, but they did the job in one-fifth the time it would have taken by hand.

Allbright and Carter bound five of the strands together at short distances and pulled the makeshift cable as far down the dump as they could. It wasn't a particularly beautiful cable, but it was strong enough to do the job for them. They brought the single piece of wire down to the end of the dump—the one that Carter was to carry across.

Carter slipped out of his soggy clothes, all except his underwear, took off his shoes. They bound the wire under his armpits, ran another piece over his shoulders so he couldn't lose his burden. After a hasty check-up, he slipped out into the dirty rain-specked flood.

Carter could swim, no question about that. He went angling across in an easy churning crawl; they paid out the wire behind him. Jim watched his every movement with anxious eyes. It seemed like

hours—in reality it was only minutes—before they saw him, vaguely through the drizzle, come to land near the box cars, saw him stand up in two or more feet of water. Three figures met him.

They hooked the five-strand cable onto the single wire and Carter pulled it across.

"I told him," said T. P. to Jim, "to pry off a couple of box-car doors an' hook that wire on 'em—or any kind of raft—it don't matter so long as it'll hold them people up. An', boy, when the 235 starts down the railroad we'll bring the whole works home." The fireman said nothing, only watched intently across the water. "If he can find somethin' to pry with," muttered T. P., "he oughtn't to have no trouble."

Carter had disappeared near the first box car; they could recognize him easily because of his white underwear. It was a long time to the watchers—particularly Jim—before he reappeared.

"He's got somethin'," called Allbright.

The white figure disappeared again, reappeared after another age. The watchers could make out the four figures near the cars; they could see the white figure bend and straighten up, bend and straighten up. They had agreed, T. P. and Carter and the rest, that it would be best were there no shouting or waving until the raft was ready. They saw the white figure straighten, saw him wave, heard his faint shout. The other figures were wav-

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ing too. Jim shouted in answer, T. P. and Allbright waved their hats.

"Come on, Jim!" exclaimed T. P., starting for the 235.

"You can run it," answered Jim excitedly. "I'm gonna stay right here!"

T. P. mounted to the cab, held the whistle cord down. Everything was set. The cable was hooked through a stake socket on the flat car. The fat man moved her ahead slowly, very carefully, half hanging out the cab window. Jim was giving him the go-ahead. "About ten miles an hour will do the trick," thought T. P., pulling the throttle a little wider. He could see Jim. The fireman was still giving him the highball. "He must want me to go faster," thought T. P.; "that current must be tough."

Jim was watching the makeshift raft with its burden of refugees breast the dirty water. Carter was swimming near it, losing distance apparently. No, he decided, Carter had hold of the back end of the raft.

The current caught the bobbing crazy craft with its human cargo, tipped it, swung it. Jim closed his eyes, turned, shouted and waved to T. P. to go faster. He turned to look at the raft again. He determined not to think who might be aboard. It was slipping downstream now, being carried downstream, but it was closer. There were still three

figures on board, with Carter trailing behind. He kept pace with the raft as it slipped downstream; it drew closer and closer. He shouted suddenly, shouted again, danced, ran down to where the raft would land.

T. P. was thoroughly disgusted. If that Jim ain't a punk fireman, he decided, then he had never seen one. They were on their way back to the main line. Everybody had forgotten about T. P. being on the engine; in fact they had forgotten that there was such a thing as an engine numbered 235 when the raft grounded. And since T. P. couldn't see anything because the raft had drifted down, the 235 had kept right on going and pulled that confounded amateur boat two or three hundred yards through the woods—all because Allbright and Jim got excited. A swell way to railroad, thought T. P. And Allbright had the gall to gripe about his wire being all busted up, as though he couldn't tie knots in it.

And every few minutes Jim's wife would say to her husband, "Honey, I never expected to see you again," and start to snifle. How was a man going to fire an engine properly with a woman hanging around his neck, thought T. P. indignantly, and a kid on the seat box with him? That woman with Jim's wife—a cousin; she better stay away from the right-hand side. He didn't have any time to

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monkey with women; if there was one thing that'd put the Indian sign on railroading, it was a woman.

They were rolling along the dry land near the old levee; they came to the flooded area. It was four P.M.; if their luck held, they would make the main line by six. T. P. was hungry enough to eat a car wheel.

There were seven people in the cab, most of them crowded up against the back boiler head. It was still raining. They slopped into the water, the rails disappeared. T. P. watched the main and side rods come up and go under, come up and go under. Slop, slop, slop. "Hell of a way to railroad," thought the fat man. The water came over the boot of the fire pan; T. P. reached over and opened the firedoor. The blower was wide open, but they were wasting more oil than they used.

"Hey, you," called T. P. harshly to Jim, "put some water in her!"

Jim grinned happily at T. P. and put the injector on. They went slopping along. After about an hour they came to the cotton platform. T. P. applied the brakes.

"Listen, boys," he said, "when we come through here before there was a current in three or four places. We'll have to do like we done before—walk ahead to see if there's any washouts. Can't take chances."

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There was a pause. It was very comfortable in the cab, out of the cold and drizzle.

"Well," said Allbright resignedly, "I'll lead off."

He went through the left-hand cab door, walked forward on the running board, descended over the pilot and walked up the flooded dump. The engine followed. Allbright walked—rather, waded—about a half mile and Carter took his place. Allbright came back to the cab shivering. After a little while, Jim arose.

"You watch the fire?" he called to T. P.; Patchbolt nodded.

"Where you goin?" demanded Allbright.

"I'll take Carter's place," said the fireman.

"Sit down," said Allbright, "an' stay here with your wife an' kid. Carter an' I'll do the walkin'."

T. P. came waddling across the cab deck.

"Get over there an' run her," he rumbled. "I'll walk." The fireman protested. "Git over there," rumbled T. P.; "I'm tired of arguin'."

So the fireman ran the engine and T. P. replaced Carter out on the flooded dump. Allbright relieved Patchbolt as they came in sight of the main line.

They were all in the cab again. Jim and his wife and kid were all crowded together on the left-hand side. The woman and the boy were half asleep. Allbright and Carter and the other woman were on

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the cab deck, sitting on the cab deck in front of the fire door. T. P. was running the engine.

He could see the main-line dump clearly now, could T. P. There was an engine working just east of the station, pulling some box cars down toward the bridge. The 368, he decided. They were certainly in one big hurry to get those cars across the bridge. He blinked. The light was failing, the drizzle continued. Those must be people at the bridge, he decided. He looked over at the main-line dump.

That couldn't be water cascading over the top of the dump. Why, the main-line dump was only a foot or so lower than the levee. But it was water. Almost before his eyes the bank dissolved under the main-line rails and ties, and the yellow flood was on them!

T. P. shouted and pointed, pulling the throttle wider. The branch-line rails curved to the right here and the break in the dump before them passed from his view behind the boiler. The water was rising, turbulent, under the cab. It covered the bottom of the fire pan, sizzling; it came flush with the mud ring as the steam filtered into the cab from below.

"Cut your fire off!" bellowed Patchbolt.

The track was wavering under their drivers, the cab was a blur of steam. They paralleled the main-line dump. The main-line washout slid slowly past

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the left-hand window and gangway. If the track would hold, they had a chance to get in, for the branch entered the main-line four hundred yards east of the washout. "Not too heavy on the throttle," T. P. warned himself. "If she slips off it's curtains for us all. Just a few hundred yards more—stay on the rails, old-timer. One hundred and twenty pounds on the gauge—that's enough for any flat car and some lousy copper wire."

The water was even with the belly of the boiler, almost flush with the cab deck. The wheels were covered—you couldn't see the rods, couldn't see the cylinders, couldn't even see the flat car behind them.

"Come on, old-timer," thought T. P., "they haven't got us licked yet."

Through the layers of steam in the cab T. P. could dimly make out the fireman, one arm about his wife, the other holding his kid. The two other men and the woman were jammed in the left-hand gangway, staring at the water, staring at the break in the dump.

T. P. shouted. Allbright came over. "We'll make the main line," said T. P., "if the track holds. I doubt if she'll pull up onto the main-line dump, but we'll get up close enough so we can walk up. You get these people off—see that they get across the bridge. The levee's gone on this side. The whole river's comin' through that break."

Allbright nodded. He crossed over, made sure

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the fireman understood. He talked to Carter—told him to take Jim's cousin over the bridge.

It was scary business, with the water sucking at the track beneath them. But suddenly the water receded and they went swinging up the incline toward the main line and safety. The 235 chuffed for the last time very solemnly and paid off. They straggled up the incline, the fireman carrying his youngster. "Never heard a whimper out of that kid," thought the fat master mechanic. They came to the top of the dump and T. P. made a bee line for the 368. Allbright was on his heels. Patchbolt clambered up the gangway of the 368.

"Let's take her down the branch lead, Sam," he cried to the engineer. "The 235's stuck; we can pull her out."

"I got orders to go no farther west than the station," answered the engineer.

"You got some new ones now," said T. P. grimly. "Let's get down there. This is an emergency."

"You take the responsibility?" demanded the engineer.

"Hell, yes!" announced T. P.

"Here we go!" said the engineer.

Allbright was standing behind T. P. "I'll throw the switch," he said.

T. P. nodded, looked over at the fireman's seat. A very scared darky sat on the seat box, one quivering hand on the firing valve.

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T. P. stepped over. "Get across the bridge, Jumbo," he rumbled. "I'll take your job."

The negro was down the gangway and gone before the fat man could sit down. They came to the branch-line switch. Allbright ran ahead and threw it; they went slowly down the grade and coupled into the 235. The water was over the valve stem, over the flat slide valves above the cylinders. They dragged her back to the main line, with the flat car behind.

A man swung up the gangway. He was the trainmaster. "What you doin' down here?" he demanded of the engineer.

T. P. came over. "We had to get the 235 out, Eddie," he explained.

"I ain't got nothin' to get out, I spose!" sneered Eddie.

"Well, whadda you want out?" demanded T. P. "Here we are."

"We'll get two coaches off the Y," snarled the trainmaster. "Step on it, Sam!"

They swung down on the Y. Allbright raced ahead to throw the switch. They hooked into the two day coaches, pulled them back on the main line. The dump was ready to slide from under the drivers; it was touch and go. Almost even with the break in the levee, only a scant hundred yards from where the yellow torrent was cutting the dump away in mammoth bites, they pulled the two

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day coaches off the Y and to safety. They backed down the main line and eased slowly across the bridge and the water beneath them was flush with the rails. They stopped on the east side of the bridge and watched the track they had come over eaten away, watched the station tilt up and slide from sight, watched the hungry river undermine the west piers of the bridge, watched the bridge itself slip majestically into the all-devouring flood—all in the space of less than thirty minutes.

“We don’t know how lucky we were!” declared T. P.

“Pretty lucky,” declared Allbright. “There was a couple of times when I didn’t think we was gonna get back with that wire!”

T. P. surveyed him in utter disgust. “Say,” he demanded, “don’t you realize we damn near lost a engine?”

OLD HAWK EYE¹

By CHESTER T. CROWELL

STANDING at the intersection of Sycamore and South Main streets, the Reverend Mr. Biddle addressed his little audience as follows: "Something ought to be done about this." Eloquence was unnecessary; one sweeping gesture sufficed to indicate that he referred to the entire neighborhood.

Philip Merriweather, president of the First State Bank, made funny little clucking noises with his tongue and stared at the jungle of drab, ugly houses, some of them vacant and apparently in need of repair. This was the first time in three years that he had seen them. The neighborhood was only ten blocks from the bank building; but it might as well have been in another state, since it was across the railroad tracks.

Riverdale, like many other towns of four thousand population, was divided into two parts. The elect resided on one side of the tracks and the heathen on the other. Mr. Merriweather, needless to say, was of the elect. So was Norman Barker,

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secretary of the local chamber of commerce. Mayor Finger knew the neighborhood quite well, having been there six or seven times during the recent campaign; however, this was the first time he had thought of it as anything other than the Third Ward. Mayor Finger had lived in Riverdale all his forty-seven years, and the Third Ward had always been the Third Ward. But the Reverend Mr. Biddle had not lived in Riverdale all of his fifty-two years; he saw the town with eyes unclouded by local traditions. "Something," he repeated, "ought to be done about this."

Mayor Finger looked at him uneasily. An impressive, dignified man, with a low, earnest tone and purposeful eyes—he meditated—a man who would lure busy, important personages away from their desks to go prowling about like this might turn out to be an awful nuisance. So Mayor Finger agreed heartily that something ought to be done.

"Who owns most of this property?" the Reverend Mr. Biddle asked.

Immediately Mayor Finger's expression brightened. If the owner of the property were going to be the person held responsible, the subject might be discussed in comfort, for William Baker never supported anyone in local campaigns.

"Nearly all of this property," the mayor answered, "belongs to William Baker."

"Old Hawk Eye," added the secretary, Norman Barker. And Mr. Merriweather grinned as he echoed, "Old Hawk Eye."

"He owns darn near a third of the town, and the Lord only knows how much land around it," the mayor continued.

"So I have been informed," said the Reverend Mr. Biddle. "Have any of you talked to him about this?" Again he made that sweeping, all-inclusive gesture.

"Here he comes now," the secretary announced. "Maybe you'd better talk to him."

Mr. Merriweather and the mayor grinned. Norman Barker turned his head and winked at them. It was a capital joke, if only the Reverend Mr. Biddle could see it; but he was a sincere, earnest person and probably wouldn't, so they kept it to themselves. Much good it had ever done to talk to Old Hawk Eye about anything. He was far and away the most unpopular man in Riverdale—Old Hawk Eye, the bargain snatcher, the bird of prey. Now they waited as he approached, carrying his heavy cane, and talking to someone. That was unusual. The someone turned out to be Leonard West, editor of the Riverdale "Reporter." Old Hawk Eye was talking and Mr. West was listening.

It was amusing to watch Old Hawk Eye when he talked, because invariably he would turn his

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head slightly to one side, very much as a bird does. His face was thin and the cheek bones prominent. He wore a black suit. One of his eyelids fell just a little lower than the other, and it gave him a sinister appearance, which was in no way diminished by that heavy black walking stick. In Riverdale, unless one was crippled by rheumatism, one did not carry a walking stick. Therefore, to the populace, this queer person, named William Baker, seemed to be a hobbling old man, though as a matter of fact he was in very good prime and frequently walked five miles for exercise. However, he was nearsighted in one eye, and therefore often found it necessary to turn his head in order to get a better focus on the person with whom he was conversing.

"How do you do, Mr. Baker?" said the Reverend Mr. Biddle. Old Hawk Eye appeared to be puzzled, and hesitated a second.

"I am Mr. Biddle," the minister added.

"Yes, yes. Glad to see you, Mr. Biddle." Then he discovered the others, and jerked out staccato greetings: "Hello, Merriweather. Hello, Finger. 'Lo, Barker. Leonard West with me. All met him, I believe. What are we doing here? Convention?" He smiled; it was barely noticeable, but nevertheless an authentic smile.

"We were looking at these wretched houses," the Reverend Mr. Biddle explained, "and trying to

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think of some means for improving the lot of these people."

"Think of anything?" Old Hawk Eye snapped out the question in his characteristic staccato jerks.

"Could we count on your cooperation if we should think of anything?"

"Certainly. It's all my property. Why not?"

"Wouldn't it help a great deal, Mr. Baker, if these houses were painted?"

"No."

"Why do you say that?"

"Good paint on 'em now. Terrible color. But good paint. Know where I got these?" His gesture indicated the houses.

"I have heard, Mr. Baker; but I should be pleased to have it from you direct."

"There was a factory. You can see the walls. Right over there. Put up during the war. These houses, too. After the war I bought the whole thing. It was cheap."

"Precisely, Mr. Baker. And for that reason it seems to me that you could afford to make some improvements."

"No. Nothing in it. Very cheap rent. Always has been over here. Hard to collect, too. Plenty good houses across the tracks. If they wanted 'em, they'd move. Some do."

"But for the good of the community—" the clergyman suggested, leaving the sentence un-

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finished. Old Hawk Eye blinked at him as though he did not understand. "For the sake of these people," Mr. Biddle added.

"Not interested in them," was the prompt reply. "Don't amount to much." With a gesture of dismissal, he turned to Mr. Merriweather, and asked abruptly, "What did you think of?"

The banker, as a matter of fact, hadn't been thinking at all; but he hastened to say, "I mailed our thrift booklet to all of these people."

"Didn't mail 'em any jobs, did you?" Old Hawk Eye demanded. And with that Mr. Merriweather was dismissed. It was now Norman Barker's turn.

"What did you think of?" The tone was neither friendly nor unfriendly. But the secretary had had a moment of warning, and that was all he needed to formulate a reply:

"The sewer system ought to be extended all through this part of town," he said, "and the streets ought to be paved. There are not enough lights here, either."

"Good idea," was Old Hawk Eye's comment. "Vote a bond issue." Mayor Finger looked angrily at the secretary. Bond issues sometimes brought political careers to a close. And this one most assuredly would, with three fourths of the taxable property on one side of the tracks and all of the proposed sewers on the other!

Leonard West laughed out loud. Old Hawk

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Eye turned on him and asked, "What do you think?"

"It isn't my funeral," replied the editor.

"And now, Mr. Baker, tell us what you think," the Reverend Mr. Biddle requested.

"Chloroform," said Old Hawk Eye, without a second of hesitation, and no embarrassment whatever. In fact, it was Mr. Biddle who blushed, while the unpopular landlord calmly addressed the editor, saying, "Come on, West. We've walked far enough. Better get back, now." Turning to the others for a moment, he said curtly, "Good day, gentlemen. Thanks for the advice. If you think of anything else let me hear from you."

They stared at him with mingled resentment, admiration, and wonder. But most of all with resentment.

"That man," said the Reverend Mr. Biddle, "should be brought to his senses. I believe that at bottom he is a good man. He just doesn't see things clearly." And the others nodded assent.

Meanwhile, Old Hawk Eye was saying to Leonard West, "Pretty good fellow, that Biddle. Means well. Got no common sense. Can't see things clearly."

They walked another block in silence. Leonard West was amused at the thought of efforts to uplift the Third Ward, and at the same time uneasy.

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There would be a fight over this, no doubt, and the Reverend Mr. Biddle was powerful. He would expect the cooperation of the press. But here was Old Hawk Eye taking him out for a walk to make a business proposal—Old Hawk Eye, who already had a line on practically every industry in the town and several of its businesses.

"My suggestion is simply this," Leonard West heard the queer little man walking beside him say: "You get out a booklet telling what your plant can do. Let the booklet speak for itself about the quality of your work. It's remarkable work. You've already got an agent in the city who looks after advertising. Let him become your city representative to receive printing orders also, and thus you have a city office. It's only fifty miles away on the main line and telephone calls are cheap. Here, in a little town, you can beat the city plants on prices. You ought to get lots of business. Now, how much money would you need for additional equipment?"

"That," said West, "would depend on the amount of business."

"Precisely. As long as that is the basis of loans you can have all you need."

"On what terms, Mr. Baker?"

"A straight mortgage, or we share in the business, each according to what he put in. However,

you should have the right to buy me out at any time in whole or in part, at one-twenty for every dollar I put in. Which do you like best?"

"I'm already mortgaged, so you come in as a partner, Mr. Baker."

"That suits me. I have unlimited confidence in your ability, and I expect to make some money out of it. I turn off here. Good day. 'Phone when you want the money."

He was gone. The editor and job printer smiled as he repeated to himself: "' . . . unlimited confidence in your ability, and I expect to make some money out of it.' Queer person, Old Hawk Eye. A genius for saying things that would stir people's resentment. And yet, doesn't every lender of money expect to make a profit out of his confidence in the borrower? But the sound of it, the sound of it, when you say it bluntly."

Having arrived at the gate of his estate, Old Hawk Eye stopped a moment to look for the head gardener. All the way home he had been thinking about the Third Ward. Trouble brewing there, he meditated. Efforts that would mature slowly might not be enough. Better do something immediately. Too many violations of the law down there across the tracks. If public agitation was begun there would be a powerful weapon in the hands of his critics. Strange that he should be

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mixed up with the Third Ward; but there it was. Better do something immediately, and thus gain time. So he entered the big stone gateway, turned to admire the curious old iron lanterns that adorned its pillars, walked across a broad lawn, and then followed a path through the shrubs.

Hansen, the head gardener, was working in the little celery bed. That small patch of ground had a history, and Old Hawk Eye smiled his queer, faint smile whenever he saw it. Here the first experiment had been made to determine whether celery could be grown in this soil and climate. It turned out a complete success, but interested no one for miles around except Hansen and his employer. Later, however, the news spread to Norway. The net result had been a thriving colony of celery-growers, about half of whom were named Hansen. Most of the others, also, were Hansen's relatives.

Old Hawk Eye took his profit from the land they first rented, then bought, and turned a jaundiced eye toward the Third Ward. Since celery was not the answer, it had occurred to him that chloroform might be.

"Hansen," he said, "did you ever see a baseball game?"

"You bet. I like it."

"Could you lay out a baseball diamond and smooth it?"

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"Why not? You give me the measurements?"

"I'll look them up to-night in the library. Tomorrow, Hansen, you get whatever help you need and go to that ground where the two big oak trees are, the big tract on South Main Street. Make a fine baseball diamond there, Hansen."

"Yes, sir."

Old Hawk Eye slowly retraced his steps through the shrubbery, then turned to the right and followed a winding path that traversed a quarter of an acre of flowers. Up the long flight of stone steps, and he was on the veranda of his mansion, for it was no less. From his rocking chair he could look down on Riverdale, and clear across the town to the new celery fields on the far side. Bohemians, over there.

A man rose as he reached the top step and came forward. "I am George Harrison," he said.

"Good," was the response. They looked at each other appraisingly, and Mr. Harrison suppressed a smile, because now he knew why the children and others who had directed him toward this house referred to its owner as "Old Hawk Eye."

"We will get to business," said his host: "I have purchased the hotel here. You, of course, have seen it. It is a beautiful building, and was once quite important, almost famous; this is a very old town, Mr. Harrison. Now, with automobiles, and a big city near by, a hotel with fifty rooms can't

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live. I bought it very cheap, so we can make improvements. I have definite ideas about what I want to do with it. If you agree, you manage it; otherwise, not. You noticed that a large garden has already been planted. Near there is a model dairy in which I am a partner, and back of that a chicken farm in which I am interested. The hotel can be supplied to the king's taste. I purpose to advertise it as a beautiful, sleepy old place in which to rest; heavy accent on no music, no golf, practically nothing going on in the town, a mossy old place on the river bank, where people can doze, and get anything in the world they want to eat. What do you think of the idea?"

"It might succeed, Mr. Baker, with a very efficient staff. I hope you don't want to employ a lot of local people."

"At first none at all except in the most menial places; work them in gradually, Harrison, very gradually. Make them learn first. I want to make money out of this. No foolishness. But there is an opportunity, with such a small investment, to show a good profit. If the idea succeeds we can expand, or you can buy me out and expand later. Anyway, go ahead, Harrison. That's all. Good day."

And so Harrison went ahead, wondering as he expended energy lavishly, if anything would come of it.

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Two weeks passed. One afternoon Old Hawk Eye sat on his wide veranda enjoying the breeze that came fitfully through the vines, and looking down on Riverdale, where trouble was brewing. Presently the tall form of Professor Holman, principal of the local high school, appeared on the steps.

"See you're making a baseball diamond," he announced. "Came to get permission for the boys to use it."

"How much would you pay?"

"How's that?" asked the principal.

"How much would you pay?"

"Well, we haven't any funds, Mr. Baker."

"Then I can't do anything for you."

"But I thought you were interested in the school."

"No. I am not interested."

"Why, Mr. Baker, you astonish me! I was told that you put up nearly two hundred dollars for the printing of our high-school annual."

"I did. That was a business matter. I wanted to see what West could do. I am not interested in the school."

"But you ought to be interested. The school does great things for our town——"

"Does it?"

"Twenty-four boys and girls from our high school are now in universities," Professor Holman announced proudly.

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"About three of them will come back," was the sudden response.

Then Old Hawk Eye said calmly: "Something is the matter. I don't know what it is. You don't know what it is. We can't change it. But something is the matter. We work to send our best people away. We don't mean to, but we do it. And then we ask each other why they go. How can they help it? They are forced out.

"There was my boy, Tom. You were proud of him, you said. At the state university it was the same. Now he is in New York City. And we need him here. Cities are built by such men as Tom. But he goes, and the Third Ward stays. If the whole Third Ward went it would be no loss. But they don't go anywhere. The school is all right. It is a good school. We must have it. I pay my taxes. But I am not interested."

Professor Holman thought it better to return to his original mission.

"What are you going to do with the baseball diamond?" he asked.

"It is leased to the Third Ward Athletic and Literary Society."

Fifteen minutes later Professor Holman was walking along Main Street, when he met the Reverend Mr. Biddle. Half an hour later Old Hawk Eye received another caller.

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"Honestly," the clergyman said, with a good-natured smile, "I don't know what to make of you, Mr. Baker." Old Hawk Eye turned his head to one side and looked at his guest with the expressionless face of a bird.

"I wonder," he continued, "if you knew that we were just about to sue for injunctions against the Third Ward Athletic and Literary Society, and that other one, four or five blocks away."

"On what grounds?"

"We went to a great deal of trouble," the clergyman explained, "to get an ordinance passed prohibiting pool halls, because they are loafing places that breed evil. No sooner was it passed than these two establishments became clubs to evade the law. They are neither literary nor athletic, so we got evidence to prove that fact, and now you lease one of them a baseball park. Don't you see what that will do to our case?"

"They want to play baseball," Old Hawk Eye said. "They must want to. They are paying for the privilege."

"I venture to say that they will not play, though, Mr. Baker."

"They've got to. It's in the contract. They've got to charge admission. Not less than ten cents. I get a flat sum and percentage. I expect to make money out of this. They'll play baseball."

"Why did you charge them for the use of the

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grounds? Couldn't you afford to give it to them?"

"I never give anybody anything."

"Honestly, I don't know what to make of you, Mr. Baker. Does it really give you pleasure to fight our efforts?"

"I don't fight you."

"Well, most assuredly you don't join us. May I ask why?"

"I don't like you."

"Don't you think that we accomplish any good?"

"Some. I think you do some good."

"Even if you grant us just that, shouldn't you join us?"

"No. I don't like you. I see things differently. The way you do good I don't like, even when it is good."

"Just what, in your opinion, is the nature of our error, Mr. Baker? I ask you respectfully and sincerely."

"You think too much about helping weak people. I don't like them, and I don't care what happens to them."

"But we are commanded to help the weak," said the clergyman.

"I know it," Old Hawk Eye agreed. "It's all right. Go ahead. I see things differently. I am always afraid a *strong* one will sink before I can get to him."

"I think I am becoming better acquainted with

you, Mr. Baker. You have opinions on the subject of how to do good. Evidently then, you try to carry some of them into effect."

Old Hawk Eye turned his head a little more to one side, and searched the countenance of his guest. No one had ever brought the charge against him of trying to do good. He was thinking rapidly; perhaps on the verge of a confidence. Then he reached a conclusion, and snapped out curtly, "No. I do not try to do good. I am in business for money!"

"I'm sorry to hear that. It means that we must for a time be enemies. I'm going to fight you and pray for you. Somehow, I can't quite rid myself of the idea that we ought to be friends. If you would only take advice, we might work together."

"I wouldn't take advice."

"Well then, Mr. Baker, assuming that you have your own plan in mind with reference to the Third Ward, could I help you?"

"No."

"Do you want a little time for your plan before I begin fighting you?"

"No. Your fight will not make any difference one way or the other."

The Reverend Mr. Biddle flushed angrily for a second, then recovered his composure and smiled confidently.

"You think not?" he asked.

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"I'm sure of it," Old Hawk Eye replied, and the interview was at a close.

The Reverend Mr. Biddle rose slowly and hesitantly, dissatisfied with himself and the results of his visit. His host also rose, and for a moment the clergyman thought they were to shake hands, but Old Hawk Eye was merely using his hand as a sun shade.

"Your right eye is somewhat inflamed," the minister remarked.

"Yes. There is a cancer back there. It is getting worse."

"My dear man, you speak of it as though it were a mosquito bite!"

"It is like one; there is nothing I can do about it. Good day."

All the way down the graveled walks the Reverend Mr. Biddle felt that he wanted to return and begin the interview all over again.

In the library Old Hawk Eye was telephoning to his attorney.

"Don't fight any ordinances they propose to the council," he said. "Let them go ahead. And then get injunctions. We may lose some of the cases here; but we can make bond and appeal. Keep them busy, Charlie; keep them busy. They're all right. Pretty nice fellow, that Biddle." At the other end of the wire Charlie laughed merrily, and

said, "All right. Nothing much will come of it except that you'll be more unpopular."

"That," said Old Hawk Eye, "would be interesting." A few minutes later he was talking to Leonard West, also over the telephone.

"Give them cooperation, West," he was saying. "They're about the best people in town, and you can't afford not to. We've got money tied up in that plant, so act wisely and look out for our interests. How's business?"

"Fine," replied West.

So the fight was launched for the uplift of the Third Ward, and right merrily it proceeded, week after week, for two months. Then came the ordinances making numerous requirements of landlords in connection with rented houses; also, proportions of the cost of public improvements that a property owner would have to pay, in the event of his owning a certain high percentage of the property on the streets in question—a percentage that let everyone except William Baker through the net. Some of the ordinances failed of adoption, and injunctions came close on the heels of the others.

Meanwhile, the Third Ward Athletic and Literary Society flourished as never before. Every Saturday afternoon its baseball nine contested with the champions of the Black Cat Literary and

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Athletic Society for glory and dimes before an audience of about three hundred persons. Both teams were becoming famous. In his little shop, Leonard West was experiencing the thrill of triumph, for business was coming to him from the tallest office buildings of a city of two hundred thousand population.

Over on the other side of the town, Riverdale Manor was slowly but surely being filled with paying guests, and George Harrison took counsel with himself to the general effect that fifty rooms constituted a very small hotel. There was plenty of space for an addition.

But probably the happiest of all the men interested in Old Hawk Eye's assortment of ventures was Leonard West, for in his own craft he was an artist, and now, for the first time in many years, he had tools with which to work. It was his privilege one day to conduct a little round baldheaded man up the stone steps leading to the wide veranda on which Old Hawk Eye so frequently spent his afternoons.

"Mr. Baker," he said proudly, "I want to present Mr. Robert Court. He is the biggest printer in this state. Now I will leave you two to talk business. I've got to hurry back."

"I've been looking at that old factory building," Mr. Court announced. "You were right. It is just about what I want. I'm ready now to expand

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my plant, and I'm going to put one part of it here. I've kept in touch with West, and you're right on those figures. He accomplishes rather remarkable economies. I think the idea is sound. He tells me that you have quite a number of available houses near that factory. I'll bring about seventy men here at the start. I don't like the looks of the houses at all; but that can be remedied. However, there ought to be ten or twelve really nice ones just as soon as they can be built, if you and I can close a deal."

"We'll close it," said Old Hawk Eye; and before sunset the papers were signed.

"There are a lot of bright boys living in that neighborhood," Old Hawk Eye remarked, as he put up his fountain pen. "West informed you correctly on that point. And I think those boys would like to work for you. They're old native stock, you know; not as adventurous as immigrants." Old Hawk Eye glanced sourly in the direction of the celery bed, while Mr. Court smiled.

"Well, there's at least something in what you say," he commented. "Yes, I'll use quite a number of those boys."

"It will not be at all difficult," Old Hawk Eye continued, "to make an entirely different-looking neighborhood over there. Bright paint is the thing you missed, and there's plenty of it for sale. Keep in touch with me. I want this move of yours to

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be a big success. I own other land over that way. I expect to make money out of it. Good day, sir."

"Good day, Mr. Baker."

Old Hawk Eye went inside and telephoned to Leonard West.

"You can print the story now," he said. "We signed up."

"That's fine," the editor commented.

"How's business?"

"Blooming. Mr. Court's plant won't hurt us. In fact, it may help."

"That's what I thought, West. Good night."

When the Reverend Mr. Biddle called at the mansion on the hillside on the following afternoon he carried a copy of the Riverdale "Reporter" containing Leonard West's account of the new enterprise.

"It looks," he said with a smile, "as though you and I had been fighting windmills."

"Yes?" queried Old Hawk Eye.

"A great many problems are settled by the sudden intrusion of new and unforeseen circumstances, I suppose," the clergyman continued. Old Hawk Eye stared at him. Finally he asked, "Do you think this one is settled?"

"Don't you?" Mr. Biddle countered.

"I do," was the prompt reply; "but I didn't think you would."

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"Why not, Mr. Baker?"

"Well, rents will eventually go up, and the newcomers will crowd out most of the present tenants. They will still be just about the same kind of people, and many of them will still be living in sorry-looking houses."

"That's true, Mr. Baker. What should we do about it?"

"I do all I can."

"But I thought, Mr. Baker, that it was your avowed policy to do nothing."

"It is!" Old Hawk Eye snapped, trying to recover his ground after an admission that now astounded him.

"I wish we could be friends," the clergyman mused aloud. "I can't understand why we are not friends."

"What you don't understand," said Old Hawk Eye, "is that we *are* friends."

"Then why don't we work together?"

"Because you do such silly things."

The Reverend Mr. Biddle laughed. "And you," he said, "do nothing."

"I have a job on which we can cooperate," Old Hawk Eye announced. "Listen to me, because this is your kind of job, not mine. I do all my work with other people's ability. I have confidence in you for this job; but you must understand it." The clergyman drew his chair nearer.

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"You have broken through my guard, and you know it," Old Hawk Eye continued. "I fight you off, but you have an understanding heart. I am not long for this world, and no great harm will come now of speaking frankly. I love this little town beyond all words to express it. Here I spent my boyhood, courted my sweetheart and was married. Here my boy was born. His mother sleeps here. I want this town to be always beautiful and prosperous. Some years ago it began to crumble. Too many of our best people went away. So I began to patch it up. I sat up on this hill like the old hawk they say I am, and watched for men worth grabbing, and keeping here.

"That's how it happens that I own a half-interest in everything, from chicken farms to a mattress factory. That's why I buy everything that fails, and give it another start. No man can hope to succeed in such a task if he doesn't make money. I made every cent I've got right here. If I give anything away, then I cripple myself for the main object in life. I'm not interested in mere population. I'm trying to win back or replace the people we lost. Only fine, strong men and women make beautiful, happy towns, Mr. Biddle. I have come to hate weak people and paupers. It's wrong. I suppose, but I can't help it. I saw them letting my town die.

"No good will come of begging people not to go

to the cities. We must make the towns more desirable. If we can't, then we ought to die. Nature works that way. My interests are now spread like a net, touching almost every enterprise we have. I want my son to come back and work with me for a while so that he can carry on—later. We need him. I wrote him a letter, but I couldn't mail it. You see, I've always been 'Old Hawk Eye,' and it's hard to drop the pose. Old Hawk Eye can't say things like this, even to his own boy. A man like me, Biddle, doesn't mind being Old Hawk Eye; it comes easy. We recognize envy as flattery. And we don't explain. But now I've got to explain.

"I never have fought you. I knew those young rascals didn't intend to play baseball; but I made them do it and took a chance that they'd like it. Boys usually do. Mr. Court isn't an unforeseen circumstance. I've been planning that deal for a year. I've got to make this little town beautiful, because some day my boy might happen to drop in just for a visit, and if he liked it he might stay!"

The Reverend Mr. Biddle rose, his eyes blinded with tears. "I'll bring him," he said, "if I have to kidnap him!"

Old Hawk Eye stared at the tears as though puzzled. Then he said, "Yes, I have confidence in you. This is a matter of sentiment, and you understand such things. I do not."

GLORIOUS DUST¹

By NORMA PATTERSON

HARBOR HOME stood on a high, high hill. Its turrets were so near the heavens that on cloudy days they dusted off the white, powdery edges of floating sky-ships. And at night the little stars, sailing up and by, had to keep a weather-eye out or they bumped into the towers and fell. A white road swept majestically past and dashed away into the tunneled greenness of a thick forest. The lawn went down—oh, *quite* down—into the road on this side, and the wooded ravine on that, and nobody knew *what* on the other. It seemed to ride on and on into the country of the sky.

Guarding the house and the grounds and the road and the very sky itself, stood a great iron gate with a lock hung on a chain and swung across its vest and into a pocket like a man's watch.

Sometimes the great gate opened and a little wisp of broken humanity slipped in. And the gate closed again. This was how Sandy had come—a tattered little fellow with a homely face and wist-

¹ From *Pictorial Review*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

ful eyes, clanking a heavy brace. Thump—thump down the hall. Thump—thump up the stairs. Hardly anybody knew that it was, in reality, a sword clanking at the side of the mighty warrior, Sandy Meed.

Some mother would have loved Sandy. She would have snuggled her nose in his soft pink neck and covered his babyish hands with kisses, and told him what a fine, *straight* boy he was growing into, and what strong legs he was getting, and how—soon now—he would be racing and swimming and playing ball and shouting through all the proud and happy games of boyhood. If Sandy had had a mother she would have told him this. But he hadn't.

And perhaps it was because he was forced to make these things up for himself, and perhaps it was because Harbor Home hung nearer the sky than the earth, that Sandy came to live in his imaginary world. From so lofty a look-out one grew friends with the stars and quite at home along the Milky Way—all peaceful, cozy bodies like the inside of a little, crippled boy. But the earth down below with its racing roads, and its trumpeting chariots, and its splendid, terrifying cities—ah, there was the marvel that set a child's heart pounding and his small head swimming! People there were who actually walked down the path and

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through the gate and straight into this wonder of a world.

From the highest point of the many acres surrounding Harbor Home, a giant oak spread its shade. During the playhour, between supper and the go-to-bed bell, this was a barkentine poking its nose into uncharted seas, exploring the frigid zones, or hot on the trail of some lawless frigate. General Meed was her relentless commander. All the heroes of all the ages sailed with him: Robin Hood. Ali Baba, King Arthur, Lafayette, Aladdin. Africa lay south by east, and the north pole shivered to the north, and the cannibal countries were always west.

As in those primal voyages, disputes frequently marred their journeys. Sandy was the recognized leader because he could think up such wonderful things to lead them into, but sometimes Toto or Micky grew ambitious.

"I'm Columbus," sang out Toto when the list of heroes had grown slim. "And I'm discovering America."

It was a master-stroke. They had to let him have it.

"Go on and be him," said Sandy. "I'm Balboa. *He* discovered the Pacific Ocean from a mountain. Here's my mountain and here's my ocean."

"That's not the ocean; it's America and I'm dis-

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covering it," shrieked Toto, pounding his ineffectual little crutch into America.

Sandy advanced threateningly. "Get out of my ocean."

Mary Agnes, a skinny, dark child, older than the others and with mothering proclivities, always took the part of whoever was getting the worst of it. She perceived now that Columbus was about to.

"You hush, Sandy Meed. He can get in it if he *wants*."

"All right, then he's dead—drowned."

Little Columbus set up a wail and couldn't be quieted until Balboa grew remorseful and suggested that they wrap him in a flag and bury him with military honors. Thus thrust in the limelight, Toto was mollified. He was very jealous of his grave, however, and demanded that they play "The Star-Spangled Banner" whenever the ship passed over him. This grew to be a nuisance in time, and they would much rather have had him back; but nobody can raise the dead, and so they had to avoid that part of the ocean.

But the most wonderful game of all was the game of "The Land Where Things Come True." After the sun had set and the distant world grew hazy they gathered at the foot of the tree and played that each had the thing that he hadn't: Sandy and Mary Agnes strong legs, Micky a straight back, Abraham good eyes. Toto threw

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away his crutch. And they opened the great gate and stepped forth into a world where every one was well and straight.

From this beginning (most of them were too small when they came to remember the outer world) must have grown the conviction that everybody outside was strong and everybody inside crippled. It all depended on which side of the gate you were on. One had only to open that gate and step out into instant perfection. Some day—some wonderful, exulting day—this would come to each of them!

The air grew cool and smelled of fern-beds. The first brave stars came out. Some place a bird made a hymn from a tree. Blue dusk—and the world gone dark. A bell rang, its voice sleepy and soothing like the voice of a kind nurse. Play-hour was ended. From the deck of the barkentine and the crowded streets of cities and from the hazardous west, these sons of the road came back to Harbor Home—a little row of gray-clad children, thumping and stumbling, and picking themselves up and plodding on.

Arabella Prim waited on the steps for them, her plump form all but obliterating the light from the doorway. "Have a care there, Toto. Mary Agnes, help him up the step. Abraham, catch onto the banister. Throw away that dirty old stick, Micky. If anybody's got any frogs in his pockets stop right

now and put them out. Look where you're going, Sandy."

Into the room with its neat, small beds. Arabella Prim tucking them up with brusque, puffing gentleness. Sometimes they dropped into slumberland, as they dropped on their pillows. Sometimes they were restless, and the smaller ones fretted and couldn't sleep. When worse came to worse Miss Prim let Sandy tell tales. She was not quite easy in her mind when she did this. Because in the tales Sandy threw away all the crutches; he took the heavy braces off little legs and kicked them into space with a strong foot. (Feeble cheers accompanied this ceremony.) And he carried the lot of them stalking and strutting over highways and through cities, while all the world paused to marvel at such agility.

Arabella Prim did not know if it were right to encourage this rampant game. It might set up false hopes. But, as Sandy talked, they went so peacefully to sleep.

All but Sandy himself. What to the others was only a bedtime tale, to him was a glowing reality. When the house slept he crept from bed and over to the window. Cats were having a parade along a stone wall, and they made funny meows and sputters. The wind grumbled and tried to push the cats from the wall, but the cats arched their tails and pushed back. A cricket flew against the moon,

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and its cry split into pieces and showered down over the hospital grounds. Yonder past the two tall cedars, past the stone bench and the lilac-bush, stood the great gate opening a way into a magic world. Some day he would lift the latch and pass out—on his way to the cities.

If there is no plan to destiny, if things do not move in circles, then how did it happen that Janet Carver came down the curving road one day and saw, for the first time, Harbor Home high on a hill, its eyebrows in the stars, its humble feet in the dust of the road? A bell rang, and from every corner of the grounds small, limping figures rose and began a labored journey to the house.

Janet caught her breath sharply, and one hand crushed over her mouth. It came to her in a flash what this house was—a home that some far-seeing fraternal order had established for orphaned crippled children.

“No mothers!”

The little figures mounting slowly, pausing to rest on crutches. She spoke to the chauffeur. “Stop.” And she sat until darkness had swallowed the house, and the sound of the bell had gone from the trees, and rang only through her empty heart.

The next day she came back and watched them again.

The third day Janet offered her services free to a plain woman with a harried expression and a

body much too plump for the nimbleness required of it. Arabella Prim accepted Janet as a gift from the gods.

"I want," explained Janet, "to do the little things that a mother would do—to unravel what troubles them and help them grow inside." She paused before adding—and Miss Prim knew that with five words opened and closed the subject forever—"I lost my little boy."

Arabella Prim stooped suddenly to pick up something off the floor. When she came up she said briskly, "Now, Mrs. Carver, here's our schedule for the day. We aren't very strict. I think you'll find us more like a real home than you suspected." She started to speak of the children individually, of Sandy and his peculiarly elastic mind—decided to let Janet Carver form her own impressions. Later, she remembered this. Had it been her fault from the start? What she didn't know was that Janet had as much to do with it as Sandy. When a person starts out on a pilgrimage he helps to create the thing he searches for.

All she said now was, "You'll know how to fit in better than if I tried to tell you. I'm on the jump from morning till night, and yet there's so much I never get around to. Keep an eye open and you'll find it. Pretty soon," she shook a warning finger at Janet, "pretty soon you'll be as busy as I am, my dear."

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It was because Sandy was the homeliest child in the orphanage and the frailest-looking that Janet took him to her heart first. He had a stub nose and freckles and really funny hair, and—that twisted little body. He had also a quaint charm, and a gallantness that was like a touch of royalty, and eyes that saw—Janet could have sworn this—things that ordinary eyes did not see.

That very first day Miss Prim was delivering a cheering and tactful lecture, the one she stressed most. Janet was listening, watching their faces, watching Sandy's face mostly and how his thoughts took wing and sped on ahead of what Miss Prim was only fixing to say. She spoke of the many, many places in life open to handicapped people, for the first principle of Harbor Home was to teach them self-support. They must apply themselves diligently, she said, and later when they left the Home they would be fitted to care for themselves.

Sandy raised his great, round eyes. "But we won't be crippled outside the gate."

Janet and Arabella Prim looked at each other. The eyes of each begged the other to deny this. Neither could. It had to stand.

"It's things like this that wear a body's heart out, Mrs. Carver," said Miss Prim later. "I've heard him say it before. Just you find out what he means and set him right. He's peculiar—it worries me every day. You may be able to see further

than I do. I can feed their bodies and keep them scrubbed and follow Dr. Marriner's directions down to the last letter; but the places where the child's mind wanders"—she looked helplessly into Janet's face—"I can't go, somehow."

Janet could go there. She had spent seven happy years walking hand in hand with childhood. She had sat on wishing-carpets and dug for buried treasure and swept the cobwebs down from the sky. She knew how to slip into their make-believe world without jarring them out of it. Because of this she found out about "The Land Where Things Come True," and the game they played under the tree when the kind shadows helped to hide their deformities from one another.

"Watch me pick up this stone with my left arm." "I can see England and Iceland and Mars and ev'rything." "I'll race you to the fence." "Let's have an Indian war-dance!"

And in the darkness who knows but what these things came to them? Watching from the porch, Janet peered suddenly forward. Was it the low swaying branches or were they strong and healthy children leaping about? Why—they were! She jumped to her feet—then she laughed at herself. "How can I be so childish!"

The go-to-bed bell rang. They were filing up the path now, a pathetic, little, limping company. Each child held his hand out as if he carried some-

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thing. Janet spoke to Mary Agnes. "Why do you hold your hands like that?"

"We're carrying lanterns."

When the nursery lights had nodded and dozed, and Miss Prim had sighed a period to the day and departed to uncertain rest along a little hall, and the nurses had gone starchily to their beds, Janet slipped in beside Sandy. She knew he would not be asleep. They whispered together in the dark. "Tell me about the lanterns, Sandy."

"Well, you see, Mary Agnes is afraid of spiders, and Abraham can't see good, and Toto hangs his crutch in the roots of things, and Micky and me stumbles, and so"—his dear, husky voice—"and so we carry our lanterns and we *know* then we'll get along all right. And we do!"

After that when they came up through the twilight, Janet too saw those lanterns glow! She thought, "God puts something into the heart of a twisted body—a special gift not granted to others."

Might not some door of existence, closed to the perception of ordinary mortals, be opened through these, if only one could gain their vision? Miss Prim had said, "You find out what he means and set him right." Janet had the feeling that *he* could set *them* right if they could climb up to him. Instead of "setting him right" she found herself groping blindly after him.

She had been talking to them about the pictures

on the wall one day: a ship, a lovable dog, a battle, George Washington.

Sandy spoke up. "I like this picture best." He pointed to a framed motto.

"But that's no picture," said Janet. "It's a verse from the Bible. A very beautiful one. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.'"

His eyes grew puzzled, but when he looked back at the verse his face cleared. He said again, "I like this one best."

Miss Prim would have grown excited in her denials. But Janet said quickly, "Tell us what you see."

His eyes took on that far-away look as he told them. He had a child's idea of a great white throne, himself climbing up on it. It didn't seem a high, cold place. It was warm and cozy up there. And Somebody put an arm about him and drew him close, and he felt at home and very happy. He could see all his little friends limping up to the throne, leaving their crutches at the foot, mounting into its snug comfort.

The children listened like small, immovable statues. But Janet was trembling. To destroy his belief, to extinguish the spark that could burn from such marred and broken clay, would be like striking at the source of all faith. After that she often had him describe his picture, and the other

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children came to call it a picture too, and to "see" it.

Miss Prim was against what she thought so much contortion of the truth. "But we must be practical, Mrs. Carver. Where will all this fairy business end if we don't put a stop to it?"

Janet did not tell her where she thought it might end. She had studied them for weeks now and she knew that for hours at a time Sandy had the whole asylum where they hardly realized they limped! He was not denying their afflictions; he simply didn't see them. Janet said tentatively, "I don't see how it can do any harm, and it may actually help them. Sandy has discarded his brace."

Miss Prim eyed her sharply. She was not antagonistic, she was uncomprehending—trying to grope her way up to Janet as Janet was trying to grope hers up to the children.

"Don't you give Dr. Marriner credit for anything?"

"Oh, a great deal! Perhaps I'm too close to them, and I'm so apt to be all wrong. But—there *is* something wonderful in a child's faith. 'Except ye become as little children——' Isn't that proof that their simple faith is the strongest force in the world?"

Miss Prim could find no answer here, and went back to her old argument. "But the object of the Home is to teach them to take care of themselves.

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If we lead them along with false hopes we defeat our ends because, in spite of all we can do, most of them are hopelessly crippled."

"They've got to where they hardly consider themselves so."

"That's Sandy's work."

"He believes," said Janet softly, "that all he has to do is step out of the gate and his affliction will fall from him."

Miss Prim shook her head. "*I* don't know what to do with him."

Janet chose her words carefully, as if finding her way through a new country. "I believe he might do it. Not the others, but Sandy. His belief is strong enough. The faith of the others depends on him. I've seen them in the garden at night when no one was about." A little, still interval of silence. Then Janet told her. "They aren't crippled!"

Arabella Prim saw at last what she had on her hands. That night she too watched. Through the veil of falling dusk they could see the small, dim forms and hear them singing. Suddenly Janet caught her arm. "There—you see!"

Miss Prim leaned forward for a tense minute. Then her plump body relaxed. She turned away with very evident relief.

"I see them limping on their crutches."

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And Janet saw it now; where a moment before they had been skipping and dancing.

The whole question should have dropped there. But it didn't. That it remained a question in her mind irritated and disconcerted Miss Prim. She called to Dr. Marriner as he was leaving the next day. "I wish you'd speak with Mrs. Carver."

"Is she ill?"

"No, but she's taking the children too seriously. She came here with her mind in a peculiar attitude—searching for a sort of revelation that might help her bear her tragedy. Her husband was killed in France through some one's careless error, and her little boy last year—I don't remember exactly what it was and I wouldn't ask her, of course, but it was an odd accident. She thinks too much about it—the *why* of it, and—well, she's brought up something I can't dismiss and I can't cope with."

The old doctor was accustomed to having hard things put on him. He found Janet on a bench, and he sat down beside her and took off his hat and let the cool air blow through his thinning locks. He thought with inward longing that it would be nice to sit here in this quiet place with a pretty woman, and no problems to thrash out. But he had chosen the way of problems.

Janet brought up the subject herself. He was that easy to talk to. She told him about the lan-

terns and the "picture" and how at night Sandy slipped out of bed and over to the window, and stood gazing longingly into the freedom that lay beyond the gate. "He goes around with that little beaming, hopeful expression, waiting for someone to strike down his iron bars—sure they are going to. He's lived so long in an imaginary world that it has come to be more real to him than the actualities of life. His crippled legs are less than the strong ones he runs on every day." She turned to him. "Is it all a child's foolish dream? Can the spirit do nothing for the flesh? Is this stick in the path stronger than thought—or hope?"

He answered evasively. "You can put anything first, make it the dominant note in your life—high aspiration, sham, deceit, anything."

She threw her head up in a gesture of controlled anguish. "But what is the meaning of it all? Is life without direction—does anything rise from dust? I can lose if it is part of an appointed order, even though I can not understand. But if carelessness and accident are the highest powers"—she faced him, her eyes a little too bright—"is it not possible, through some divine lifting up of the spirit, to get the better of these blunders of destiny?"

"A physician must believe so. He knows just how far science can go. He knows that beyond that there rises a stone wall—but the spirit can fly over."

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She sat considering this. It occurred to him that he was not doing what Arabella Prim had taken for granted he would. But Janet Carver's eyes had lost that unnatural brightness. He sent a guilty look toward Miss Prim's window, and spoke further.

"Keep to your ideals, my dear. Never lower your banner. Somewhere you'll come out on the mountain-top. If it were not for a few like you—and Sandy—the old world would spin backward. Read history: some man saw a vision that no one else could see. And with this bubble he shoved the whole stumbling, unbelieving world and its load of materialism a step further. Kings and armies couldn't have done it. I think that answers your question about the stick."

Janet said, "I've been trying to work out something inside me that eludes shape. Right now I don't know where I am—but this helps. I believe that certain things open our eyes to a new level of existence. Loss is one of them. And it has come to me that whatever I'm looking for, I shall find among people who have lost something, as these have. That's why I can see them dance at night when no one else can."

He was a little uneasy. "I wouldn't dwell on it too much, Mrs. Carver. Remember that the same thing reaches nearer the truth; that any ray of light, any revelation, must lie in that direction."

"I'll remember." She placed a softly pleading

hand on his arm. "Talk with me now and then. It's steadying."

He shook his head as he rode away. He had spoken with such assurance. But alone, "I wish I knew," he said.

Miss Prim's prediction that Sandy "would forget about it" proved wrong. So many of Miss Prim's predictions did. "What are you thinking of, Sandy?" Janet asked him as he sat with his eyes on the road.

He said, "Here it's hard to climb up to the house from the tree. But yonder"—he turned to watch the motor-cars along the road, and how they swung and dipped and rose, and dropped from sight—"yonder, *just like that* you can flip over the hills."

"But perhaps," suggested Janet gently, "if we got there we should find that hill hard to climb."

He shook his head confidently. "Haven't you noticed how everything *out there* flies? Once you set foot on that road, there's nothing you couldn't do. You'll see when I get out!"

"When I get out!" The steady conviction of his voice! Where had he gotten it? Who was his father, who his mother? What knights of romance, what flashing lances marched behind him and made him what he was? When he spoke there seemed to rise from the dead dust of the past a shadowy line of ancestors, handing down to him—a little crip-

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pled boy and quite alone—the bright fire of conquest—the spirit of victory.

By now the entire working staff of Harbor Home was wrought up about Sandy. It was plain to the least observant that he was getting his house ready. They did everything they could think of to get his mind off it; invented new games, bought new books, went on new excursions into the untrodden recesses of the deep ravine. The thing they didn't dare do was—go out the gate.

Sandy found the same healthy, childish delight in all this that the other children did. But alone his eyes went back to the road, and the gate which would open for him soon.

"There never *was* such a state of affairs," wailed Arabella Prim.

The nurses cried over him. The crabbed old cook made gingerbread men and animal cookies and other delicacies unheard of in homes for orphans. Janet mothered him, and brooded over him, but when he spoke of his coming transformation she could not contradict him. But it was breaking her heart.

Summer passed, and Autumn touched the trees with a beckoning hand. A soft, south wind blew down, stirring life into a drooping forest. "This is over," it said. "Come along." And the leaves danced and left their branches—and were gone.

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Sandy grew quieter. He played less. In his body he was better—miraculously better—but his face held an ethereal, listening look, as if the south wind had spoken to him, too, and beckoned on.

And after all it was Miss Prim—not Janet—who could bear it no longer and called them together for consultation. They came—Dr. Marriner, a younger physician, the nurses, Old Thunder and Lightning. He managed the finances, which meant that he had the last word always. He reminded them of this by continually rattling the change in his pockets. (Every institution has at least one of him.)

Miss Prim told them how Sandy was all but disrupting the Home and bringing anxiety and gray hairs to hard-working heads because of his persistent belief in what lay beyond the gate. The nurses expressed themselves. The younger physician made sage, analytical statements that smacked of note-books. He spoke of "my cases" with an air of experience. Old Thunder and Lightning thought well of this and nodded his three chins. Dr. Marriner sat silent, apparently deep in thought. Without a soul knowing it, his eyes fixed Janet's courage to where it could not have gone alone.

She stood by the window, her hands clasped before her. And presently when they had thrashed things out, and gotten nowhere, she turned and looked hopefully from face to face. "Has it ever

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occurred to any of you," she asked quietly, "to let him try his experiment?"

Miss Prim put her plump foot down flat. "He's not strong enough for a shock. When it failed it would kill him."

"But would it fail?"

They stared in dismay at her. Old Thunder and Lightning rattled his change. "This is extraordinary, Mrs. Carver."

"The situation is extraordinary. Oh, I know it sounds like a fairy-tale. People acquire the habit of being ordinary—of never looking past a certain point of credulity. Yet there *must* be things beyond our feeble limitations. Death and birth are. We have no power over these, but they persist among us. If faith can not lift us above ourselves, what can? I tell you," her voice was low, but it rang and rang, "I've seen them dancing like well children!"

Again they stared at her, this time a little amused. Old Thunder and Lightning spoke coaxingly.

"You mean you *thought* you did. Miss Prim watched. What did she see?" (Then some one had told him about that!)

"I saw them limping on their crutches!" Arabella Prim flung it at him like an admission of shortcoming. "Janet Carver saw what *she* looked for. I saw what *I* looked for."

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He was unmoved. "Mrs. Carver was not close enough to judge. You weren't, were you, Mrs. Carver? You didn't go very near now, did you?"

"No, indeed! If for one hour of the day they can strike off their shackles, oh, do you suppose I'd risk cheating them of it—of the merest *chance* of it—to satisfy my own mind?"

"But, my dear lady, here you are asking us to accept the supernatural. Surely you can see the absurdity of all this yourself!" His manner said, "Get rid of her and you're rid of the problem."

The light from the window fell about Janet—on her hair—on the white sanctity of her brow. Her eyes looked straight into his, and her words held a quiet force. "If there is anything higher that the soul can lift itself up to—this is it! His faith can make his body whole. You have no right to keep him prisoner here!"

The silence was broken by Old Thunder and Lightning, who blew his nose sharply. Miss Prim had called them together, and now she rose and dismissed them with a grand wave of her hand. On the scarred battle-ground of her soul, she swung heavily one way and heavily the other.

"She's right! And unless somebody keeps me from it"—with a defiant look around—"I'm going to let him open the gate to-morrow."

Janet turned to her with misty, eloquent eyes,

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and she said, "If it's true—if it should happen as he expects, I'll take him home with me, of course. And all his life, so far as I'm able, I'll bring him up in his own faith."

Janet was to tell him. She chose the night because she could not bear to see his face when he heard.

"Sandy, to-morrow you are going out the big gate."

What light came in his eyes, what terrific joy pounded and raced across his homely little features, she would never know.

He spoke almost at once. "And Toto?"

"No, just you."

"Can't Mary Agnes and Micky come, too?"

"Not this time, dear."

His first thought had been for them. But soon the thrill of coming freedom, rushing down like a mighty wind, swept him away. "Out the gate and down the road! Skipping—hopping—jumping! Fine old legs to go on! Won't I? I'll be well and strong, *won't I?*"

"God help me," she prayed. Aloud, "Well and strong!"

He lay shivering with excitement, his thoughts racing, planning what he should do and see and hear. But after a time he grew quieter, and then

silent. He slipped closer to Janet as if his timid child's heart clung, just at the last, to the dear familiar things he knew.

Janet's arm held him close. Janet's tears were hot on the pillow.

They gathered on the steps to see him off; Miss Prim trying to appear calm and looking more flustered than ever; the nurses tearful and silent; Dr. Marriner inscrutable as always; hovering in the background a disapproving, mumbling cook whose long hours of toil had been brightened by a quaint little tike and his insuperable, gay stories. Old Thunder and Lightning had washed his hands of them the day before.

Sandy himself was quite tranquil. His freckles were scrubbed with conscientious zeal and his hair had been drenched and plastered. He had a Boy Scout cap, long hoarded against the day. He was so serene and his preparations so pathetic that Arabella Prim's heart misgave her once more, and she stood wretched and irresolute—afraid to give him his chance, afraid to deny him that chance.

Dr. Marriner settled things. He put a hand on Sandy's frail shoulder and he spoke with brisk and cheering vigor. "Well, young man, here you go! Good luck—and God bless you!" The last an echo of inner supplication that rose, without the doctor's knowledge, into audibility.

Sandy started down the winding walk. He was

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a long time covering the distance. The little group on the steps watched in an agony of suspense and dread. Surely something would stop him before he reached the gate—some hand that had directed him until now—that had moved in spite of all they could do. He had reached the gate. His hands fumbled with the chain and it dropped, rattling against the iron. The great gate swung wide.

Janet had waited in her car by the side of the road. Even to herself she would not admit the possibility of failure. Sandy's room was ready for him, arranged with the toys and articles of a strong and healthy child. She had announced to the servants, "A little boy from the Home who has been cured is coming to live here."

Sitting in the luxury of her car, waiting, she found the moment all but unbearable. Shortly now, and she stood face to face with the test of the invincibility of all that she had fought her way up to. She clasped her hands—they were icy—in her lap with forced restraint. Ah, it was a mistake to bring your life forward to one stark, telling climax! How much easier to have been contented with accepted levels! Unable to endure the tension, she stepped from the car and stood, motionless and a little white, in the clear Autumn sunshine.

Then, before her eyes, the gate swung slowly open.

He stood just inside; he stood and stared, and did not move. Janet had never seen him look so small—so crippled. It came to her that he might turn back; that he too had flung all he had of faith and the blind courage of childhood into one high, revealing moment. Would he have the strength to meet it? If he wavered he was lost.

Janet forgot herself and her own problems—forgot everything except that she must save him, and started toward him, running—calling “Sandy!”

He caught the ring in her voice, saw her face transfigured by a shielding, protecting love—but to Sandy it could mean only the *exaltation of victory!* His small face lighted in answer to it, grew transcendent with joy. His arms went up. It was a gesture of release, of wings about to be spread—the lifting up of the clay of the earth.

Janet stopped in the path. She saw that the miracle had happened, that Sandy was running toward her. The spirit dwelling in the soul of a little waif, kindled and nurtured, had carried him to victory! And as Janet’s arms closed about him the cycle of her life rounded into the perfect design of an Eternal scheme.

HER OWN ROOM¹

By THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW

I

THE wedding was over. Grandma Martin came home from the station, where the family had gone to tell Isabel and Walter good-bye, with a wonderful, almost unbelievable feeling of freedom and contentment. Grandma Martin had not felt so pleausurably excited in a long time; not since years before, when Grandpa Martin was alive, and they lived in the little, square, white house in Morrilton. But this was now, and Grandma had the same tremulous feeling of happiness.

It wasn't because Isabel was married; that is, not because of what marriage might mean to Isabel. Walter was a nice fellow of course; Grandma had seen to that. It wasn't for Isabel's sake—because it was nice to think of Isabel as a bride—that made Grandma happy. It wasn't because Grandma had gone to the church and then to the station and home again in a taxi-cab; Grandma had ridden in auto-

¹ Reprinted from *People Round The Corner* by Thyra Samter Winslow, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

mobiles before, a number of times; at old Mrs. Wentworth's funeral, and the time Mrs. Rogers was so sick and had sent for her for a ride, too. And Grandma went to church every Sunday when her rheumatism wasn't too bad. So it wasn't the ride or the church. Of course Grandma's happiness was due, in a way, to Isabel's marriage and Grandma knew that Isabel was Mrs. Walter Reynolds now because of her efforts, and that Isabel's father—Grandma's son, David Martin—knew it, too, and Isabel's mother. That was all right. But Grandma knew why she had wanted Isabel to get married, and knew why she was so very happy now; for, and for the first time in twelve years, Grandma was going to have her own room.

A bedroom to herself! A real, regular bedroom, with a big closet in it and two windows, and a real bed and a dresser and two chairs! The room had been Isabel's, and now Isabel was married, had gone away for a honeymoon, was going to have an apartment of her own when she came back.

There may be those who would have sneered at the bedroom, those to whom white-enamelled and brass beds are not the last words in elegance, to whom red and shining almost-mahogany dressers are not things of beauty. Grandma Martin was not one of them. The wall-paper had been of Isabel's choosing, a cream paper covered with big red roses and with a cut-out border of roses in even

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larger and more impossible shapes and colorings. It never occurred to Grandma that this wall-paper might be changed for her, though, given a choice of wall-papers, an impossible situation, Grandma would have chosen something simpler and plainer; Grandma liked plain things. Grandma accepted the room as it was, a perfect room, her own room. It was just a step from the one bath-room. You could open the windows the way you wanted them, lots of ventilation or just a little, turn the radiator off or on, obeying only your own whims—or those of the janitor—in regard to heat.

More than that, that bedroom opened up to Grandma whole new avenues, almost forgotten avenues. Just think of it, in your own room you can go to bed, if you like, when you like, with no thought to the other inhabitants of the apartment. You can get up when you like, just so you rise in time to set the table for breakfast; you can take afternoon naps undisturbed, have your things where you want them, dress and undress nearly at any time—your own room.

Ever since Isabel announced her engagement, Grandma had been definitely considering the room. Before that, of course, there had always been the thoughts of it, even remarks to confirm them. "If Isabel ever marries, Grandma can have her room," or, "That room will be fine for Grandma if Isabel isn't here." Since Isabel's engagement, for two

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months now, the room had become almost a possession. Grandma had gone into it when Isabel was not there and looked round. She had sat down in the rocker at the window, imagined herself rightful owner, imagined her few possessions placed in neat order on the dressing-table, her clothes in Isabel's closet. Her own room!

It would be wonderfully pleasant, that room. For twelve years now Grandma Martin had lived with her son David Martin, and his wife, Mary, and their two children, Isabel and Ralph, and all of those twelve years Grandma had slept in the dining-room. Of course if you had asked her, Grandma would have told you that it was not a bad place to sleep. The dining-room was a nice room, fairly large, with a round, golden-oak table and six golden-oak chairs and a glittering, golden-oak buffet, holding an array of even more glittering cut glass—a punch-bowl with twelve cups suspended from its sides by metal prongs, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin's Saturday-night card club when they'd been married twenty-five years, and several odd pieces which Mary Martin had won at cards. On the wall were a pair of "dining-room pictures," appropriately of "fish and game." In the dining-room was a davenport, too, bought specially for Grandma, and covered with shining black leatherette, and it opened into a bed at night. Of course it had to be made up when you opened it, and the

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pillow and covers had to be brought in from the hall closet, and that is not easy when one is seventy-eight. And when one sleeps in the dining-room, one has to wait until all of the other members of the family have gone to bed before one can go, especially in an apartment such as the Martins had, all on one floor. There was a living-room in front, and then a hall on which opened two bedrooms and the bath between them, and at the end of the hall was the dining-room. You had to pass through the dining-room to get to the kitchen, and you know how it is—how people, especially young people, always want to get into the dining-room or the kitchen just about the last thing at night. When Ralph or Isabel had company in the living-room, Mr. and Mrs. Martin stayed in the dining-room, reading newspapers or playing cards, so Grandma could not go to bed as soon as she felt sleepy; she did not have a great deal of privacy. But sleeping in the dining-room was all right; Grandma did not complain about it. Didn't Ralph sleep in the living-room? Ralph's springs were undoubtedly just as hard and his mattress just as thin as the ones Grandma slept on.

David Martin was not poor. He had a small, but paying, electrical supply shop. He had moved twice in those twelve years, but he had never increased the number of rooms in his home. In New York rents are high and getting higher, and one

pays for apartments at so much per room. Martin was a thrifty fellow, tall and sallow and calculative. He was a bit of a braggart, and liked to think of the way he lived as "pretty good for poor folks." He felt that he was self-made, because Grandpa Martin had died when David Martin was in his first year of high school, and David had had to quit school and go to work. He was proud of the fact that he had come to New York "without a cent" and had made a success. He could have afforded a bigger apartment, with a room for Grandma and maybe a room for Ralph, too, but he did not see the need of it. Perhaps he did not realize what it meant to an old lady to sleep in a room where three meals are eaten every day—a room that was as much a family room as the living-room or the hall, with no place for little things that women like. But having a mother thrust upon one for support when one's family is quite complete without her is not always wholly pleasant. David Martin's expression about his apartment was, "I don't want to give the landlord all my money." He liked the thought, and used the expression or a similar one frequently. He said frequently, too, that the davenport Grandma had was "just as good or better than the bed my wife and I sleep on." He was rather proud of the way he treated his mother. He gave her a little spending-money every month, and until she grew so deaf as to prove an annoyance by asking ques-

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tions, he had taken her to the theatre or to the movies two or three times every season. Occasionally he bought her something new to wear and often asked: "Do you need anything, Ma?" Grandma's wants were few; when one is over seventy and spends most of one's time sewing or reading, there is not a great deal one needs, and Grandma did not like to ask for things or be an expense. Ralph and Isabel were rather selfish, thoughtless, never did much for Grandma; but, then, young people—Grandma got enough to eat, and she slept quite comfortably on the davenport except on restless nights. She would have liked to help with the cooking, but daughters-in-law have ways of their own, and Grandma was not one to cause trouble by trying to interfere. She always set the table and washed most of the dishes and dusted, did what she could.

II

Until Grandma Martin was sixty-six, when she had come to live with her son David, after her children grew up and married, Grandma had lived with her daughter Jessie and Jessie's husband and their daughter Ruth. Grandma had assisted at the birth of Jessie's three children and at the funerals of two of them. Grandma loved Jessie; but, then, she loved David, too. But Jessie was Grandma's

favorite daughter; that was a little different. Ruth was Grandma's favorite grandchild. She had helped rear Ruth, bathed her and dressed her and petted her. Ruth married when she was nineteen. Grandma was glad Ruth married such a fine man, a young fellow and not very rich, though with a steady position, and exceedingly fond of Ruth. Ruth and her husband moved to Chicago when the firm transferred him there. Then, the next year, Jessie's husband died, and that left Jessie and Grandma all alone. Jessie went to Chicago to live with Ruth, went to live with her daughter as Grandma had done, quite the right way to do, naturally. But of course Ruth could not have Grandma, even if she had wanted to have her. One cannot expect a young man on a small salary to support his wife and his mother and a grandmother besides. Grandma knew that. She was glad Ruth was happy and had a nice little home and that Jessie was happy with her. There was no one else—Grandma's second son had been dead for twenty-years—so Grandma had gone to live with David.

David Martin was a good man—good, but rather close and settled and solemn. Mary, David's wife, was a good woman. Grandma appreciated her virtues, but Mary just "wasn't our folks." She was from New England, with a long upper lip and a thin mouth and a way of saying things shortly or not talking at all. Still, she made David happy.

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Grandma was glad of that, and David and his family were happy in a quiet and, to Grandma, almost a sour way. Grandma liked Ruth, with her little bubbles and giggles, and Jessie, with her sensible housewifeliness and her pleasant, understandable love of gossip and discussion. There was something austere about David's family. But Grandma had not had much choice. There was only David to go to, or an old folks' home, and somehow an old folks' home shows that you are unwanted, that your children are failures or ungrateful, unable to have you; it was better at David's.

So twelve years ago Grandma had come to David Martin's and fitted into his five-room apartment and his selfish and self-congratulatory, rather heavy family as best she could. David Martin and his wife occupied one bedroom, and there was no question of Grandma's having that room. The other bedroom belonged inalienably to Isabel, the "young lady daughter" at sixteen, twelve years ago. Ralph already occupied the couch in the living-room; so they had bought the davenport for Grandma.

Now Isabel was married, and Grandma was to have Isabel's room. The family was agreed on that. Grandma had waited for the room long enough and patiently enough, certainly. At one time, even, she had feared, as David and Mary had feared, that Isabel would not marry at all. Isabel was not an attractive young woman, certainly; she

took after her mother's family. She was pale and thin to gauntness, with rather uneven and straight light hair, a nose too large, and high cheek-bones. She was quiet, and had a sharp, rather coarse voice when she spoke; not the type young men like. And yet Grandma had known that if Isabel did not marry, the dining-room davenport would remain permanently hers.

Grandma had been the active matchmaker for Isabel. She had tried for a long time to find among the sons of her acquaintance a marriageable young man who might consider Isabel a suitable mate, but she had not succeeded. Grandma recognized Isabel's limitations but, too, she had seen far less likely girls attain matrimony. Then one day when Grandma was sewing for charity at the Ladies' Aid she met Walter Reynolds. He was a son of a member of the society. Isabel was twenty-seven then, and without suitors. It was a rainy afternoon, and the streets were slippery. When Mrs. Reynolds suggested that her son, who had called for her, escort Grandma home instead, Grandma accepted eagerly. When they reached the apartment, Grandma urged Walter to stay to dinner, her family would be glad to have him. Walter was a round-faced, good-natured-looking fellow of thirty-two or so, with small eyes, a wide, rather empty smile, and a weak chin. Grandma found out on the walk home that he had a small, but dependable,

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mercantile position. It was not a splendid opportunity, but quite as good as Isabel might expect; better, perhaps, than Isabel expected. Isabel had shown no great longings for matrimony. Lacking personality, she lacked the need of attraction as well.

Grandma Martin did what she could to invest Isabel with charm. All the way home she talked about her, preparing Walter for a favourable impression. She flattered Walter in her old-fashioned, gentle way. On arriving home, Grandma went into the kitchen and told Mary, her daughter-in-law, who was preparing the meal, about the guest she had brought home, what a nice woman Walter's mother was, and Walter seemed a fine fellow, too. Something might come of it. Mary had hoped that Isabel would be popular, even married by now. While pretending great indifference to Grandma's hints, she opened some of her own canned peaches, a special treat, and prepared a salad of tinned fish.

Dinner at the Martins was usually of the simplest. The family was the sort that seldom had dinner guests. Grandma and Mary put the dishes on the table, and David served. Ralph, rather spoiled and petted and of a snarly and morose disposition, was always served first. Then came Isabel's portion, and then her mother's was ladled out. After that came Grandma's plateful, and

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then David served himself. David was not specially selfish about food, but Mary was economical about the quantities she prepared, and when not quite enough for two helpings remained at the end, Grandma's portions suffered perhaps a trifle more than David's own.

When there was a dinner guest, the usual custom of serving was varied, and there was generally a little more to eat. Instead of eating almost in silence, broken only by a few complaints from Ralph, a whine from Isabel, a *staccato* sentence or two from Mary, a few comments on the weather or business—business was always dull—from David, the family tried to break out into a general conversation, touching lightly on topics of the day. The first night that Walter dined with the family, Grandma tried with great eagerness to create a spirit of gaiety quite at variance with the usual behavior of the family. It meant a lot to the whole family, to her, this visit. Ralph was in a good humor; his football team had won a game that afternoon. David, openly eager that Isabel marry, and seeing in this stray caller, as he saw in every masculine who approached him, a chance for Isabel, became talkative. Grandma praised the canned peaches and told how Isabel, "the best little cook you ever saw," had put them up during the preceding summer. Grandma had peeled the peaches,

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and Isabel had assisted rather vaguely in the canning.

From the first Walter seemed fairly interested. After dinner Ralph put some records on the Victrola, and Isabel, usually silent, expanded enough to add stray remarks to the conversation.

The next week Grandma called on Walter's mother; it was quite all right, of course, as she lived only a few blocks away. Grandma found out that Walter had two brothers and that his mother did not object to his marrying. Walter came home while Grandma was there—Grandma had strayed from her usual custom of hurrying home early—and escorted Grandma home again and stayed to dinner. Grandma and David flattered Walter, Ralph listened respectfully to his opinions, and Isabel's silence made her seem just pleasantly shy. A week later Grandma telephoned over to Mrs. Reynolds for an embroidery pattern that she thought Mrs. Reynolds had, and Walter brought it over that evening. Grandma prepared Isabel for the visit as well as she could. Isabel did not like advice from an old woman like Grandma, but Isabel was a welcome enough victim to matrimony if it required neither charm nor exertion—most of her friends had married during the preceding years—so she did her best to please Walter, giggling a bit hysterically, but trying hard to be entertaining, now that the quarry seemed possible.

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David himself was especially enthusiastic over the affair. On previous occasions he had brought home business acquaintances. Each call had seemed to him important, an event. Each caller had been to him a distinct matrimonial possibility. None of the callers had ever returned for a second call. Her father had lacked finesse and skill, or perhaps Isabel had too definitely lacked charm. Now, with the fat and slow Walter, Grandma found little difficulty. She hinted of suitors whom Isabel had "turned down." She told of her own popularity and girlhood, how much Isabel resembled her, how girls of Isabel's type develop into such splendid cooks and housekeepers and mothers. Walter, a bit confused and perhaps fascinated by the net spread around him, continued to call. Finally the engagement was announced, and this was followed as quickly as possible by the wedding.

David was grateful to Grandma. Having an old-maid daughter was displeasing to him, not the right thing; it reflected on his success. Girls ought to get married. He definitely acknowledged that Grandma had found a husband, a good husband, too, for his only daughter. That is, he acknowledged it to Grandma immediately after the engagement, and promised Grandma a new black-silk dress for the wedding, which he kept his word about purchasing. If Mary or Isabel felt Grandma's help, they did not mention it. Later the thought

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of Grandma's assistance became a bit hazy even to David Martin, and finally disappeared altogether.

III

Now Isabel was married, and Isabel and Walter had gone to Atlantic City on a honeymoon. They were going to spend a whole week in Atlantic City, and then they were coming back to New York and going to a hotel to stay until they found a suitable apartment. Now that Isabel was married, she became suddenly, vaguely unimportant to Grandma. Her room was different.

Grandma pretended interest in the conversation that was going on in the living-room. Mr. and Mrs. Martin, Ralph, and a boy named Howard, Ralph's best friend, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, friends of the Martins, and their daughter Eileen were discussing the wedding. They had all just come back from the station, piled rather closely into yellow taxi-cabs.

"Didn't Isabel look sweet! I've never seen her look better in my life. I'm glad she got married in a blue suit instead of white."

"Did you notice Mrs. Roberts and the three daughters in church? It's about time one of those girls . . ."

"Wasn't Walter nervous? A fine fellow, Walter, a fine . . ."

"Isabel said they'd write to-night or to-morrow, anyhow. I hope they have good weather in Atlantic City."

"She certainly made a sweet bride. Isabel is . . ."

Grandma listened as long as she could. Then quietly, so as not to attract attention—but, then, Grandma did most things quietly; it made her feel less in the way—she walked out of the room, down the hall, and into Isabel's room.

The room was upset, full of discarded things, the shell of Isabel as a girl; the box and tissue-paper for the flowers; the dressing-gown that Isabel had been "wearing out," not good enough for marriage and Walter; Isabel's old slippers; letters that had come that day, a wedding present half in its box.

This room—she'd clear it out to-day, still warm as it was from Isabel—was hers. Had not David, even Mary, said so? Grandma was a trifle afraid of her daughter-in-law, and yet sorry for her. It was hard on Mary, having an old woman, a mother-in-law, living with her all the time. Grandma knew that.

Grandma crept out of the room. She did not want them to find her there; they might laugh. Of course they did not know exactly how she felt about the room. And there was Ralph. Grandma had always been a little afraid. Ralph did not have

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a room, either, and Ralph liked to have his own way, and now, of course, being the son of the family, he might think—Grandma decided to ask casually about it at dinner, when the guests were gone, and find out definitely. Maybe she could start sleeping there right away, to-night.

The guests left with much laughter and unpleasant, heavy jests about the young couple. Mary went into the kitchen to prepare the meal, just a "pick-up," and told Grandma not to come in. "Set the table, Ma. No use you standing around in here, with nothing to do."

Finally dinner was on the table, and the family seated. Four seemed few. There had been five, and six when Walter came in, as he had done frequently in the last two months. It was nicer this way. Six at table make a lot of dishes to wash; one gets pretty tired.

They spoke of the wedding: what the minister had said, agreed he'd spoken very nicely and not too long; about the trip and the weather's staying nice.

Grandma took courage. She had to gulp a bit to make the words come. Then she said:

"I think, if you don't mind, now that Isabel—don't you think that I might have—go into—Isabel's room?"

David and Mary and Ralph looked at Grandma. She trembled and tried to pretend it did not matter.

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"Of course, Ma, if you prefer Isabel's room, though your bed is newer and every bit as good as the one Mary and I sleep on."

"I—I think it would be nice," said Grandma.

"Well, Ma might as well take it," Mary spoke as if it were a new thought just occurring to her. "A spare room don't mean nothing but company, and we don't need 'em. You might clean up in there to-morrow."

"I—I could fix it up to-night," said Grandma. She was ashamed because her voice quavered.

"Wait till to-morrow. We're all tired out after the wedding," said Mary. "You got a place to sleep, you know."

Ralph pouted, but about something else. He did not seem to care about the room. To-morrow! It was a certainty, then. She could have Isabel's room, her own room, a room all to herself.

Grandma cleared the table after dinner, taking innumerable little steps between the kitchen and the dining-room. She "brushed up" under the table and put the chairs in order. She washed the dishes then while Mary helped with the drying. Mary's skin was tender, it seemed; hot dish-water hurt it. Grandma's hands were thickened and bent with rheumatism and used to dish-washing.

The dishes done, Grandma sat down in one of the dining-room chairs with some sewing, to wait, as she always waited, for the evening to pass. To-

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morrow night she could go to bed early. Grandma usually found herself growing sleepy right after dinner, and she was ashamed of it; for one of the family always spied her if she closed her eyes for a minute, and would say something about, "There's Grandma asleep again," or, "Wake up, Grandma. You look so funny with your eyes closed and your mouth open." To-night some company came to see Ralph, so Mr. and Mrs. Martin played cards at the dining-room table, quarrelling peaceably over their hands. Grandma nodded a couple of times, woke up again. This night was like nearly every other night for the last twelve years, and yet different, the last night of its kind. To-morrow night she could go to bed at eight if she wanted to.

At ten o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Martin gathered together their cards, said: "Good-night, Ma," and retired. Grandma heard them talking together in their bedroom. They were quiet finally. In the front part of the house Ralph and two friends still talked. If Grandma went to bed, Ralph would complain: "We came to get something to eat, and there was Grandma stretched out asleep on the davenport. This place looks like a tenement. Can't she wait until my company goes home?"

Grandma sewed as long as she could, but her eyes burned before she had finished. So she folded her hands. It was uncomfortable, the dining-room chair, but of course Ralph did not want her in the

living-room, where his friends were. There was a low rocker with arms in Isabel's room!

Grandma woke up with a little start, ashamed of having dozed, and, picking up the evening paper, read for a little while. Her eyes hurt, and she was dreadfully sleepy. Were Ralph's friends going home at last? Now they were just moving round; here they came. The three boys trooped into the dining-room and on into the kitchen. At least Grandma had not been in bed; Ralph could not get angry. She was not asleep, even.

"Oh, Gamma," called Ralph, "anything to eat here, cookies or anything?"

"I'm a-coming," Grandma answered as she always answered, and hurried with quick little steps into the kitchen. She found a box of store cakes and three apples for them. Mary would probably get angry about the apples, about "feeding the neighborhood," and Grandma might have to say that she had taken one of them, the day before, for lunch. That would fix it. Mary and Isabel had gone out then, and had forgotten to leave anything for Grandma.

Finally, with a "See you to-morrow, Ralph," the boys left, and Ralph returned to the living-room.

Now Grandma could go to bed. She opened the davenport—it was rather heavy—then brought in, in three trips, her blanket, her sheets, and her pillow from the hall closet. Stooping over the bed—her

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back did not really ache so much now—she smoothed the sheets with her bent fingers. Tomorrow she could make up her bed in the morning, have it all ready just for turning down at night. Of course David and Mary could not realize how hard it is to make a bed at night, when one has to open it oneself, too, when one is old and very tired. Still, they were good. Hadn't they both said she could have Isabel's room?

It took Grandma only a few minutes to get ready for bed. She always hurried as fast as she could. She wore a false, grey switch to eke out her very scanty hair, and she tucked this up into a roll and slipped it under the pillow. Once she had been guilty of putting it on the buffet, and Mary had passed through the dining-room while Grandma was still asleep and had not liked it. False hair on the buffet! One could not really blame Mary.

Grandma fell asleep almost immediately despite the hard rod in the middle of the springs. Some nights that bothered her, though she had learned how to lie so as to avoid it.

She woke up with a start the next morning, and then remembered: it was the day she was going into her own room! It was still early; she didn't hear anyone stirring. She was glad of that. She liked to be all dressed before anyone had to pass through the dining-room. It was rather awkward

being caught still in bed or not completely clothed. This morning, as usual, Grandma was the first one to wake up. She got up quickly, and, putting on her old grey bath-robe, which hung in the hall closet next to Ralph's rain-coat, Grandma's dresses, and the family umbrellas, she made the bed. She tucked her night-gown into the pillow-slip next to the pillow, as she always did, for someone was always opening the hall closet if she hung it up there, and saying things about it. She put the bed-clothes back into the closet, closed and fastened the davenport, depositing upon its sleek and uncomfortable surface the two hand-embroidered pillows that reposed there by day. Grandma hurried to the bathroom; it was the best time to bathe. If she waited until later, David and Ralph were wanting to get in, and at night Grandma was too tired. Then Grandma dressed. She took her clean house-dress from a pile of three that she had carefully hidden in the buffet drawer under the kitchen towels. She always put away the laundry herself, and Mary always took the top towel. They'd laugh at her if they found her dresses there, but even house-dresses have to have some place.

Grandma set the table then, and had the coffee on when Mary came into the kitchen. Theirs was a simple breakfast of stewed fruit, a cereal with milk, and toast. Grandma was so excited she could hardly eat anything. She waited patiently for

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David to leave with his customary, "‘Bye folks; don’t work too hard," meant for a great pleasantry. He had an idea that "women have got an easy time of it." It was as if Isabel had never been there. No one mentioned her name, and yet there was her room.

After the dishes were done and Grandma had swept and dusted the living-room, she said, with a careful attempt at nonchalance: "I—I believe I’ll go in now and fix up Isabel’s room. I think I’d like——"

"You certainly are hankering after that room, Ma," Mary answered. "Well, you might as well go ahead. Don’t put that lace scarf back on the dresser. Isabel’ll want it; and leave all of her things in her closet the way she has them until she comes back and looks ’em over."

"Of course; that will be all right. My things won’t take up much room," Grandma said pleasantly.

IV

It was a delightful occupation, cleaning up her own room. First she swept it, opening wide both the windows. Then she dusted, going carefully over every round of the two chairs, polishing the mirror and the top of the dresser. She made the bed, putting on her own two sheets; she’d used the

top one only two days. Then Grandma brought in her possessions; there were three empty drawers in the dresser and lots of closet space. From the buffet, hidden under towels and napkins, came the morning dresses, aprons, and decent, thick underwear. From the back partition of the knife-and-fork drawer came Grandma's comb and brush of imitation ivory that Ruth had sent to her the year before for Christmas. These, and a silver-plated mirror, once owned by Isabel, but discarded when her father gave her a better one, Grandma placed on a clean towel on the dresser. She added a picture of Ruth and Ruth's two children sent to her only a few months before, an old picture of Jessie, and a kodak picture of Isabel and Ralph. Next to this she put a little china vase that had been given to her at a church bazaar five years before, a gay little vase with blue china forget-me-nots on the front of it. To these she added a hand-painted fan Jessie had done years before, and, as a final touch, a faded daguerreotype in a broken frame of Grandpa Martin and herself, taken sixty years ago, sitting stiffly, holding hands. A fine array! the room was in order, her room! Grandma was tired now, but that did not matter. Nothing seemed to matter but the room, a room nobody had to pass through, a room with a door that closed and locked—her own room.

All afternoon Grandma sat and rocked; Mary

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had gone to her card club. It was fun just sitting still. She hardly remembered to put on the dinner dishes in time, and was just finishing setting the table when Mary came home. At eight o'clock, almost as soon as dinner was over and before she felt even sleepy, Grandma said: "I'm awfully tired. Believe I'll go to bed, if you'll please excuse me."

"She worked herself tired fixing up that room in a hurry," volunteered Mary.

"So you got moved into Isabel's room?" asked David. Then: "Women are always wanting to move around. I don't know that her mattress is any more comfortable than yours, and it's much older."

"It's a very nice room," said Grandma, softly, and went to her own room.

Grandma undressed slowly, with a light on and the shades pulled down. Seated in her bath-robe, in the rocking-chair, she finished David's socks, and read a chapter in a book a woman she had met in church had loaned her. It was a wonderful evening. At nine o'clock she went to bed. It was a fine bed, and all ready to get into just by turning down the spread, and with no bar in the centre to have to think about.

Grandma woke up the next morning at her usual time; she was not one who had to depend on alarm-clocks. Then, when she realized where she was, in

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Isabel's bed, in her own bed, she lay there luxuriously, instead of getting up immediately on awakening, as she usually did. But she was up and dressed and had the table set in plenty of time. It was nice to dress, with all of one's things spread round ready for one, instead of having to hunt for them in little, secret places, and to be sure that no one would want to pass through one's room or would see one through an open doorway.

It rained steadily for the next three days, but Grandma hardly knew it. She was not accustomed to running round much anyhow. And with a room to herself, going outside for pleasure seemed superfluous. Didn't she have all the pleasure she could think of right there at home? Having a room to herself was even nicer than she had thought it could possibly be. After twelve years—twelve years of the dining-room, of hurrying mornings to get up, of waiting nights to go to bed. Well, she had her her own room now. It was not so much that Grandma thought of the room as a reward; she did not believe in things like that. It was just pleasant, complete. She was old, and she had tried to do the right things. She had had hard times, losing Grandpa while she was still young and, after Grandpa died, when the children were little; but that did not make any difference now, for they had grown up, Jessie and David, into good children,

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good people. Those hard times were long ago; why, even the nights on the davenport were long ago. This was now, and she had her own room, a pleasant room all to herself, and nice meals. David and Mary and Ralph did not mean to talk unkindly or abruptly to her, that was just their way; and now that Isabel was gone, things did not seem so crowded. Four people in five rooms is not much, one could not ask for better than that, better than Grandma had—a quiet, peaceful life with one's son and his wife and their son, and a room all to herself.

At noon on the fifth day after Isabel's wedding Mary received a telegram from Isabel from Atlantic City, economically using all of the allowable ten words:

"Raining here better at home arrive seven time for dinner."

Grandma was sorry about Isabel. It seemed a shame her honeymoon should be spoiled. Still, Isabel seemed far away, of no importance, in a different world. Isabel and Walter would go to a hotel and then buy their furniture and get an apartment. Grandma would even help Isabel fix up the apartment if they wanted her to.

Mary telephoned to David about Isabel and Walter's coming, and he and Ralph met them at the station. They all came home together, carrying

suit-cases and talking all at once about the rain, the trip, the things that had taken place during Isabel's absence, little things, letters of good wishes, a delayed wedding gift.

Dinner was an exciting meal that night at the Martins. Walter, in his slow, rather stupid way, described the charms of the hotel room they had occupied, of the lobbies and the grill-room. Isabel, too, occasionally volunteered a word of praise of their trip and of their expenditures.

"We got to start saving now," she said, "with Walter's salary so small and the prices what they are. It's awful. We saw Irene Jennings in Atlantic City—you know, used to be Irene Scott—and she said that they gave up their apartment in One Hundred and Seventeenth Street and simply can't get another one except for double the price. And when I think of the hovels I saw before I went away, it's fierce. Ma, did you see that apartment I spoke to you about, the one near the Robinson's, on St. Nicholas?"

"Yes, I was there Tuesday. It's gone, and the only one left in the building is twenty dollars more than it used to be."

"Gee! I don't know what we'll do."

Walter grinned. For the first time Grandma actually disliked Walter's grin. Until now Walter had been someone for Isabel to marry. Now he became a person, a personality, and to Grandma

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an unpleasant one, too sure of himself, too slow and fat and round and white.

"Prices are something awful," said Walter. "It makes a person wonder whether they ought to of got married or not, eh, Isabel?"

"It ain't that bad, I guess," said Isabel, and gave him a glum look and then a quick smile, which left her face looking more discontented than ever.

"Rents, rents, rents," said David Martin, solemnly. "You bet I was smart. I saw what was coming. I always look ahead. I took a four years' lease here. Now I've got them where I want them. They can't pull any monkey-shines on me. Some folks take the biggest apartment they can pay for, with elevators and a lot of fancy trimmin's, and sassy niggers in the hall. 'Don't give the landlord all your money,' I always say."

"You said it," answered Walter.

After dinner the family went into the living-room. Usually only two lights were lit, but this was a festive occasion, so all four lights in the immense and hideous central chandelier were turned on, and both lights in the equally ugly glass table-lamp.

Grandma decided to go to her room early, but it wouldn't look right, running away, just yet, so she sat stiffly in a straight chair near the phonograph.

"We'd better be getting along," Walter said at last. "I might as well ring up from here and find

a hotel room. We came right on from the station and didn't stop to get any. Always can find a room in some hotel, though."

He went to the telephone in the hall.

"Only thing they had—room and bath for two, eight dollars. I turned that down," he reported. Then added: "Seven dollars for room and bath"; then: "That one's all filled up; nothing doing there." Then: "They want eight dollars, too. I told them nothing doing. Highway robbers! They can't play me for a rube."

Even then Grandma did not suspect what was to follow. It was David who spoke, still proud because Isabel had finally acquired a husband.

"I say, you folks, what you want to be running around in the rain for, finding a hotel room? You got your suit-cases here. Why not stay? Ain't we got room?"

"Sure we have," agreed Mary. She was the type of woman who never gets used to men, no matter how long she has been married. Despite her lack of good looks and charm and her prim, almost austere ways, she coquetted ever so slightly with every man she met, a mere suspicion of a giggle, of a flourish, a combination of shyness and self-consciousness. She did this now and added: "I couldn't think of my daughter—and my new son—going out in this weather, as if we didn't have a home for them."

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"But you haven't got room enough, I'm afraid," protested Walter, politely.

"We got my room," said Isabel.

Grandma understood now—understood, trembled, but refused to believe. She wanted to say something, but couldn't. What could she say?

"Grandma's got that," said Ralph.

"She has?" Isabel was cool, almost a bit sneering. "She was in a hurry about it, it seems to me."

"You—you said I could have it; always said I could," Grandma's voice quavered. She wanted to add something important, vital. She waited.

"Yes, we did say if Isabel went away you could have her room," said David, heavily; "I'll agree to that. But Isabel ain't away. Isabel's right here." He gave his slow, patronizing smile. "We can't put Isabel out, can we—Isabel and her husband?" he went on. "What's the use of them going to a hotel or hunting around for an apartment? If they found one, they'd have to give the landlord all they've got. No, sir, as long as I got a roof over my head, my home is open to my children."

There was a pause. Martin looked round, expecting praise for his eloquence.

"Well, if you insist," said Walter, "it sure suits me if Isabel wants to. Of course if we'd be a bit of trouble, if Isabel——"

"Papa's right," said Isabel. "I'll need enough money, with everything so high, without spending

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it on rent. We might as well stay here at home. It ain't as though we aren't going to chip in and help with the table, Walter and I," she finished grandly, with a nod to Walter.

"Sure thing. That settles that. We ain't no charity patients," said Walter.

"I'd better see about our room," said Isabel. Then to Grandma: "You moved your things in and all, I suppose."

Grandma nodded. She couldn't trust herself to speak.

Maybe Isabel saw the pain behind the expression of calm that Grandma tried to assume; perhaps only her own selfishness cut her.

"I'm—sorry," she said. "I wish you could keep your things in my closet. If—if it wasn't for Walter's things, there might be room; but with my things, and him here now——"

"Grandma's got the hall closet she always had, ain't she?" asked David. "It ain't as if we were turning Grandma out into the street. Nobody don't need to take it hard. Grandma can have the room she's always had, and her own bed, again. Walter and Isabel will have lots of space in Isabel's room. It's a big, fine room, with two windows; better than you'd get at one of those flossy hotels for eight dollars a day. And Grandma—Grandma ain't got any complaints. She's got a good home.

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As long as I got a home, I got room enough for all of my children and for my mother. Why, right now Grandma's bed is better than the one that I sleep on and years newer. Yes, it is; it's lots better than the bed I got."

Grandma got up and followed Isabel from the living-room into Isabel's room. She took little, slow steps. She felt tired. She'd get her things out right away, so that Isabel and Walter could have the room. It was all right, of course, as David said; she'd have what she'd always had, had for twelve years—the davenport in the dining-room. It didn't much matter, after all. She'd had lots of happiness, lots of good times: Grandpa, the years with him, the children when they were babies; the years with Jessie. She might even have the room again, some time, when rents got lower or Isabel grew discontented at home. One can't expect too much. She ought to feel satisfied; she felt that, with Ruth married and happy, a nice family, and Jessie with them; and David and Mary happy in their way, and Isabel married. Walter was a good man, would be good to Isabel. After all, she was an old woman; mustn't expect too much out of life. After all, she had had good times.

"I'll—I'll get my things out right away; just take me a minute," Grandma told Isabel in her usual, cheerful way. "I'll tuck 'em right away

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where I always kept 'em, so you and Walter can make yourselves comfortable. It's a nice room. I—I hope you and Walter are—are right happy there."

THE GOLD PICAYUNE ¹

By MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON

IF you will walk down Rampart Street in the Vieux Carré, which is the old French Quarter of New Orleans, and, coming to Rondeau Street, turn to your right, you will come straight upon the house of Madame Arraline Granet.

Flush with the sidewalk it is, like all the houses in the Vieux Carré, a rosyng yellow stucco with thick green blinds like double doors and a big green gate like a bigger double door. You can't miss the place. A little sign dangles from the balcony above:

MADAME GRANET

COSTUMES POUR LE CARNAVAL

Perhaps that is what you have come for—a *costume pour le Carnaval*. Well, pull the little chain that hangs from a hole in the gate. You will hear the tinkle of a lazy bell, and presently will come Bobo, Madame's little black serving-boy, and you will enter from the sun into a brick-paved patio,

¹ From *Pictorial Review*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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shaded and cool, with bushes of flowering myrtle and Cape jasmine, pinks and honeysuckles, and yonder a parrakeet dozing on his perch, and at your right a little, curved green stair. And down this stair will come Madame, for she sews up-stairs.

“*Bon jour*, my frien’. Go in de parlor. I will come.”

She has said this so many times that she speaks it quite intelligibly. So you go into the first door off the patio into a room whose blinds open on the street—if they are ever opened—a room with the highest ceiling you ever saw, and long mirrors in tarnished gilt frames, and a black square piano, and a big fireplace—a beautiful, indolent, dusty, old room. And presently will come Madame, followed by Bobo, his loose sandals slapping the floor, his rigid black hands bearing a tray on which repose a plate of little cakes and glasses of iced orange-juice, or, if the day is not too warm, cups of black coffee.

Oh, she will treat you very nicely, will Madame, and she will rig you out in as beautiful or as bizarre a costume as you may desire, and she will charge you enough, to be sure, for *le Carnaval* comes but once a year.

Funny little Madame Granet! But she isn’t Madame, really; she’s Mademoiselle. She never had a lover in her life, to say nothing of a husband. But that is the way with the Vieux Carré. Arra-

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line should have become Madame twenty years ago (at the very least!), so the Vieux Carré had gradually and firmly christened her as such. And Arraline had acquiesced in the tactful ceremony and hung out her sign. She didn't know why she hadn't had a lover, but she surmised, and you and I would have known immediately on seeing her.

That funny little face! Even twenty years ago, at the proper time for marrying, it had been a funny little face—like a monkey's, with bright-brown eyes and an incredibly funny nose. If a young man of those days had heard what a gay heart had Arraline, what stored-up treasures of tenderness and sunshine—if he had heard and said, "I will go and make her my wife," he might have gone, but he would never have proposed. He would just have fallen alauding at that funny little face. I don't mean that it was repulsive. It was just comical. And marriage is no joke. It was just the face of one to make you a clown costume or a goblin suit, to rig you out as a gnome or a brownie, but not to sit opposite you at breakfast for the rest of your life.

Ah, well! Arraline was forty-three now, and she had about quit worrying over it. Sometimes she felt that a little memory or two might have helped, but even so, she was very happy at times, happier than any *man* among us would believe.

In fact, on the day of which I write Madame

was simply too happy to be hot. She sat in the high-ceilinged front room and played "Showers of Pearls" on the black square piano. Old Clotilde, who kept the needle-and-pin shop next door, heard the sounds and said, "Arraline feel good. She have finished sewing. She will go to de parade ter-morrer."

And that was true. To-morrow would be the last day of the Carnival, when *Rex* would enter in state, the big iron key to the city lying on a cushion on his lap, the gorgeous procession of floats trundling behind, and all the people in masks. Madame had gone to that parade every year of her life. She had never been a part of it, except in the masks and costumes she had contributed, but it was a part of her. Her child-heart—without which no one may actually enter the kingdom of Mardi Gras—loved all the sounds of it, all the tumult and the tinsel and the smells. Yes, she was going.

But that was not why she played "Showers of Pearls" on this hot March day. She played because Julie was coming, and because she was going to surprise Julie with the loveliest costume in the world.

Julie was Madame's niece, her brother's child. She lived on a plantation between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Julie came in every year for the Carnival, but always before she had been just a little girl. She had merely held to Madame's

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hand and watched. Now she was eighteen, which was very different. First she was going to a luncheon up-town with twenty other girls and boys. They were to dress as dolls, and after the luncheon they were to put on masks and enter the parade in a decorated float.

Julie should have come in before, but she had been delayed. There were smears and tear-stains on the letter she had written Tante Arraline, a letter not clear to Madame at best, for Julie's mother was "Américaine," and Julie was not being raised on "gumbo French."

What Madame did discover from that letter was that Julie was to attend the party in a white dress with blue ribbons, a dress she had worn as a child. Would Tante Arraline save her a mask?

Julie wear an old dress to the Carnival! Madame passed from horror to inspiration. The word "doll" exalted her. She fed on it as a poet feeds on a word. And the dress that she evolved was a poem, indeed—a joy, a dream, a delicious miracle of a dress. Madame began to sing as she played "Showers of Pearls."

A tinkle of the gate bell. Madame was up and down the step before the first slap of Bobo's sandals.

Julie! Julie with red roses in her hat! Julie with her cropped black curls, her lashes, her little white teeth, her gold-brown glance.

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"Oh, *ma petite!* You's a lit' bit early. Bobo, you lezzy goat, de bags! Oh, I so hap' dat you come so quick, Julie!"

Julie was little and gay like Madame, with Madame's tiny hands and feet. (Moreover, you noticed Julie's hands and feet, which you never did with Madame's.) Indeed, Julie was Madame all over except for that funny little face. Ah, but Madame was glad that the *bon Dieu* in making Julie had left off that funny little face!

"Regard de patio!" Madame was delaying the moment when she should surprise Julie. "Bobo have sweep him for you." She pointed to the persimmon-tree by the parrakeet's perch. "See de lit' pussy-man tree. He bloom for you—and Josephine," indicating the parrakeet, "he wek up because you come."

Julie regarded these familiar wonders affectionately. But she must go up-stairs and shake out her things. So they followed Bobo up the stair and along the balcony of the patio to the room Julie always slept in.

And there was the dress spread over a chair—chiffon pink as a peach-blossom, the flounciest, filmiest, softest, rosiest thing you ever saw.

Julie stopped still.

"Whose is that?" she whispered.

"Yoze!" cried Madame, hands clasped under her chin, her eyes shining into Julie's.

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Julie moved, touched the dress, lifted the short skirt. And there on the chair were all the little pink underthings, the pink-silk stockings, and the tiny silver slippers.

Perhaps you have seen slippers like those, shining and arched with pointed toes and little straps held down with rhinestones. Julie never had. They don't grow on plantations. She turned with a wild breath and flung her arms about Madame's neck.

"Put dem on," whispered Madame. "Tek off yo' thangs and put dem all on."

Julie obeyed. It was like the sudden blooming of a rose. She twirled before the long mirror. She danced. Madame, who had seen Julie happy many times, had never seen her so happy as this. She was laughing, but her eyes were wet.

"Oh, deze slipp's!" laughed Julie, dropping into the dialect as she did sometimes. It had been the "baby talk" of her first years. "Oh, deze pink dress!"

Madame nodded, watching her.

"You love dat draiss because he is de fust party-draiss you have. I be sorry, me, when you git so many draiss, so many party you ain't laugh and cry sem time no mo'.

"Julie, listen. One day I find a picayune. I ain't never have no money. Dat when I's a lit' chile and tek music-lesson. Dey whip me to mek

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me set on stool down-stairs. Dat time I find de picayune I so hap' and glad I learn 'Showers of Pearls.' He de only piece I learn clair through. I play him now when I git hap' and glad. But I ain't nev' so hap' no mo' when I gits money—dollars, five dollars, honderd dollars. Dat picayune—he were jus' a lit' copper picayune, but he were de fust one, de only one. He were gold."

Julie was humming softly.

"Is there a mask, Tante Arraline?"

There was. There was also a wig of golden ringlets and a pink-tulle hat that tied under the chin. Julie laughed again.

"Now I know," she said, "now I know why I have felt all along that I should meet *him* at the Carnival. I'm going to meet him, whoever he is. Won't it be thrilling?"

"De fust one. De only one," said Madame.

Julie had put on the mask, a beautiful, blank, pink-and-white countenance of molded gauze that hid her dusky, glowing face completely. Even the eyes were painted over, blue as violets. Julie put on the hat.

"In this dress and this hat," she said, "how can he help loving me?"

"Yes. Often it is de draiss. Any man muss love you in anythang. But many a man have marry a draiss of mine."

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Julie sat down and took off a silver slipper. It hurt her foot, she said.

"*Mais, non!*" cried Madame. "Yo' foot is no bigger dan mine. Put him back on and stretch him."

But Julie took off the other slipper.

"I will wear the white ones that I brought," she said, and looked very tired.

"Oh, my *pauvre petite!*" cried Madame. "You muss go to bed early. I will give you yo' sup'—queek. He is a long ride from de plantaish'. You go to bed and rest, and in de mornin' doze foot—he will be li'l' ag'in."

It was late in the night that Madame heard the scream. She knew that it was Julie's scream even before she was thoroughly awake. She rushed barefoot upon the balcony, into Julie's room. And there stood Julie before the mirror, a lighted candle in her hand.

"Look at me!" screamed Julie, and turned to Madame a face—oh, such a face! A face that looked as if it had a plum in each jaw, a face like a distorted moon.

Madame clutched her.

"Who have do dat? Oh, my po' Julie—is you crezzy?" For Julie was pushing her off.

"It's mumps. Keep away, or you'll get it too."

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"Kip away!" Madame was infolding her in a tight embrace. "How you git doze mump?"

"I was exposed. They thought the time was up and let me come. I was feeling awful, but I came." Julie looked again in the mirror and flung herself on the bed.

"Oh, to think," she wailed, "to think I spend the year at the plantation where there's nothing but pigs and mud and darkies and mules and my face is perfectly good and now I come in town and look like——"

"Po' lit' Julie!" Madame covered her with the big white spread. "I nev' have doze mump. I don't know what you give him. I go next do' and tellyphone. You be 'fraid by yo'self?"

"What should I be afraid of?" demanded Julie. "The worst that can happen has happened to me."

"Po lit' Julie!" The uptown doctor, the only one Madame could get, pronounced the stern mumps law, sentenced her to bed, sentenced her to prison in the little room with all the world of Mardi Gras outside. He sent a nurse to sit with her, and Madame—and Bobo, too, whose past was innocent of mumps—was left outside. The nurse was fat and tired and grateful for this easy case. She dozed most of the time, and Madame came often to the window and looked at Julie.

That very morning Madame took out the dress and carried it into the room where she sewed. It

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was the room above the parlor, and its blinds opened upon the balcony from which hung the sign. All morning Madame heard the revelers running along the rue Rondeau, laughing, shouting, singing; and when she looked through the blinds she saw them—in costumes of every color, in masks of every shape and kind. There wasn't a mask among them so beautiful as Julie's mask.

Madame went back to Julie's window, and the nurse was awake and scolded her. Madame went back to the room where she sewed and picked up Julie's mask. If Julie wore the mask, couldn't she go to the Carnival? Madame went back to the window and mentioned the idea to the nurse.

"Do you want to kill her?" screamed the nurse. "Don't you know it's catchin'? You get my goat."

Madame withdrew, confused. The nurse spoke such perfect English, and so fluently. And even Julie had not liked the idea.

Madame went back to the room with the mask. She would wear it to the carnival herself. She had not thought of going, now that Julie was sick, but she would go and come back and tell Julie all the things she saw. There would be funny things to tell Julie.

Madame looked at the little silver slippers. She would wear those too, and be a part of the Carnival. She would wear the stockings and the slippers. Madame put on the slippers, walked toward

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the mirror. She put on the mask. How lovely she looked! What it must be to carry around a face like that—a natural face, so blank and sweet and beautiful! Madame sighed. Suddenly she turned and looked at the pink dress. Then she closed the blinds that opened on the patio, slipped out of the drab husk she wore, and stood for an instant in her queer plain underclothes.

Very still in the patio at this hour of *siesta*. Very still in the room where the fat nurse dozes. Softly a door opens from the room where Madame sews, and a little pink figure steals out and down the stair—a figure with yellow curls and a tulle hat that ties under the chin. A figure with pink-silk ankles and silver feet. It tiptoes past the parakeet's perch and opens the big gate. (Ah, but it is a blessing that Bobo has gone to the parade!) In the gate it pauses and looks back. "*Pauvre petite Julie!*"

But there will be lots of funny things to tell.

Sunshine. A little hot, but no danger of rain. Oh, it's nice to be a part of it, one of those who move on light feet, jostled, smiled at!

"That's a pretty one—that one in the pink dress."

"What's yo' name, baby?"

"Some high stepper—yes?"

People were in pairs, in groups. No masker

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but herself was alone. No matter. She would the more easily find a place to watch the parade. Already the sidewalks were crowded. Faces looked from upper windows all along Canal Street. Music! The music of the parade!

A tall man at the street's edge—one who must have been holding his place for an hour—glanced down at the solitary pink figure, thrust her before him. The music! The music, crashing, glorious! The band marching! *Rex!* Cheers—waving—confetti. All the gay tumult of the floats. One all flowers. Another all gems. And now a dragon a block long.

“Here, you baby doll!”

It was the Knights of the Purple Grove. A strapping negro walked before, bearing a placard that proclaimed it. Purple trees with fruit of purple balloons. Purple toad-stools on which sat blue and purple knights. One knight stood at the float's edge dispensing necklaces, strands of blue and purple beads. They flashed in bright streaks as he flung them amid the crowd.

“Here, Yellow Curls!”

“He means you,” said the man who had given her his place. Madame felt afraid, but she held out her hands. The necklace flashed in the air, fell at her feet. A darting hand snatched it before she could pick it up. A small boy scuttled back into the crowd.

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"Aw, aw!" yelled the crowd in indignation at this highway theft.

"Here's another!" The float had trundled past, but the knight leaned from its end, holding out a second shining strand.

"Come and get it!" he called.

Others were running after the float, but he held it out of reach. Madame began to run also. It was not hard to catch the float. She held up her hands. The necklace fell about her neck. The crowd cheered.

"Come on!" cried the knight as she paused. He reached up, jerked a purple balloon from the tree above his head.

"Come on, Twinkletoes!"

She ran after the float again. So many were running. She held to the float's edge. He bent down in his impressive mask, looked at her through painted, golden eyes, pressed the cord of the balloon into her hand.

"Cave of the Gnomes." "Ulysses and the Sirens." "The Erl-King's Court." The floats trundled past behind their placards. Madame had run a block. She found a new place in the crowd.

"Are you alone?"

The voice was low and secretive, not like the voices of the Carnival. Madame looked up into the face beside her, an unmasked face, swarthy and

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heavy-jawed. She did not answer, and the man—in shirt-sleeves, smelling of gin and onions—pressed closer, an insidious pressure. No one behaved like that at the Carnival, even though he smelled of onions—and gin.

Madame yielded to the pressure of that uncoated shoulder, let it thrust her slowly back into the crowd. Then she turned and pushed her way to the inner edge of the sidewalk. She paused then, still clutching the cord of her balloon.

“Pardon me. Is this yours?”

Madame turned quickly. Ah, the purple tunic, the impassive mask, the same voice that had called, “Here, baby doll!” the same hand that had dropped the beads over her head!

He was holding out a handkerchief, a yellow one edged in black lace. Madame disclaimed it, feeling her heart beat. He had come like a breath of reviving air. But how had he got there? “Not mine,” she said faintly.

“I thought not.” He thrust it inside his tunic. He stared impassively, then he picked up her hand—oh, lightly, gaily, as one picks up a strange hand at the Carnival—and drew it through his arm.

“Let’s have a soda,” he said. “You look as if you were wilting.” And as they walked along together, “Are you wilting, Twinkletoes?”

“How you git here?” asked Twinkletoes.

“I walked. But first our float went dead. I

think I wished that on it. Anyhow, the trouble-wagon had to come up and get busy. We were hauled out of the parade. I got off and came back to find you. I found you too, for I followed your balloon. Here we are."

He drew her into a little shaded place set with tables, where he rapped sharply with a knife, for everybody was out, watching the parade. And when the sodas were before them:

"Far be it from me," he said, "to ask a lady to remove her mask. We'll just make a hole in her temporary mouth to put the straw through."

And he did, taking out his knife and cautiously, delicately pricking the red lips of Madame's mask, Madame standing as still as young Tell stood when his father shot the apple. For his own mask he thrust it up a little way, and Madame saw a square, young chin and a clean-cut, rather large, young mouth. The sodas were comforting, and they neither said a word till they were through. Then the purple knight pulled down his mask and looked at his watch.

"Time's up, Twinkletoes. I've got to run. Are you sorry?"

"Yess," said Twinkletoes with disarming frankness.

"Then perhaps—" the knight leaned across the table—"perhaps you'll tell me where you live. You haven't got a husband?"

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"No, no, no!" It was a wild little whisper.

"Which question are you answering? You haven't got a husband?"

Twinkletoes shook her head.

"Then may I come to see you?"

Twinkletoes shook her head again.

"Oh! All right." The knight could be nonchalant, yet gallant still. He rose, escorted the lady to the door, and with a lift of his plumed hat and a word of good-by was gone.

"Hey! You gimme de slip, didn't you?"

Onions—gin. The thick, secretive voice.

Madame did not look up. She began to move away. A hand fastened on her arm.

"Wait a minute, my pretty. I know yo' kind. You gimme de slip, but you took up with that swell from de float, didn't you?"

The parade had passed beyond this block. The crowd had followed. There was no one near to turn to, but at least the streets were clear for running. Madame wrenched her arm free and ran. She was on the French side of Canal Street and she knew her way. She turned the first corner she reached, into a street so dark and narrow that it is called "L'allée." She would hide here while he ran on. But in the Alley the man overtook her, caught her into his arms.

Madame screamed. Where were all the people?

Where were all the gay, friendly people? Oh, that any one should abuse the Carnival in this way! That any one should dare! Madame, twisting in the man's arms, slapped his face, scratched it, kicked his shins with her sharp silver toes.

He laughed, holding her as if she had been a toy. The necklace broke, showering about them. The man began to push up her mask. Oh, *mon Dieu!* He was going to unmask her here on the street. He *was* unmasking her!

No. There he was. There he was, lying in the yellow clay of L'allée, lying flat on his back at her feet. Madame straightened her mask, looked up. Ah, the purple tunic, the impassive mask, the nice brown hand doubled into a fist—a fist that had struck out and was waiting.

"Get out!" said the knight, and Madame would not have recognized his voice. "Get out before I call the police."

The man reared himself on his elbow, got up, fingering his eye. He looked from the lady to the knight. Then he turned and went in the direction of Canal Street.

"Do you live this way?" the knight asked Madame, indicating the Quarter.

"I must go alone. How you git back?"

"They had gone on without me. I was coming back to find you. I heard you scream."

"Oh, I loss my balloon!"

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"I will get you another. No—let me walk with you. It's getting late. I can't let you go alone. Do you know who that was, that man? He is Tony Taranto, the worst tough in New Orleans. He'd steal, he'd murder, he'd misuse the liberty of the Carnival—" in a crescendo of impeachment—"Did you see him laugh when I threatened him with the police?"

Madame had heard of Taranto and his gang, knew that they lived in some den in the Quarter. But bad people were all over the world. Besides, Mr. Taranto had returned to Canal Street.

The knight, however, was bent on accompanying her, so she turned about, walking back toward Canal Street. And now she became aware that the dim alley was alive, that strange shapes were moving at the farther end, shutting off the entrance to Canal Street. The knight had seen them as soon as she. He stood still, his hand moving out to stop her. Then *whisk!* She was caught up into his arms, and he was running with her along the Alley, back into the Quarter.

She thought, "They meant him to come this way," and she saw over his shoulder the dark shapes gathering for pursuit. Alas, the Vieux Carré would be deserted now, the houses mere empty shells! It would be an hour before people began to return from the Carnival.

Where was he taking her? Had he guessed where she lived? How could he run like this with a woman in his arms? They dashed into a side street. The pursuers were behind them. They turned into Rampart Street. The pursuers divided, would head them off!

But he had stopped, had turned into a house just off Rampart Street, a house whose court door stood always open.

Madame knew the place well—the old home of the Croisille family, who had long ago moved uptown. It was falling into disrepair, inhabited by a group of artists, a poor 'Cajan family, a bootlegger or two. There was not a sound from any of its rooms as he lowered her to her feet in the great dim court. And now there sounded footsteps outside—footsteps and whisperings. The knight was moving his fingers along the wall. The wall began to slide. A door opened.

Madame saw a small empty room with damp-looking walls and floor, probably the abode of tarantulas and scorpions. Then in another breath she was standing inside it and the door had closed. The knight was beside her, whispering.

"They'll never find us here. It's the old wine-cloister of the Croisilles—where they kept their smuggled wines. Even the bootlegger up-stairs doesn't know about this."

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"Maybe Tony Taranto live here," whispered Madame.

"No, he doesn't. But we may have to wait a long time." His arm, which was still about her, pressed her closer. "Afraid?"

"'Fraid?—wid a man what kin run like you?"

"Who wouldn't run with valuables on him—like you? Twenty to one they were, and if they'd got me down——

"Oh, Twinkletoes, how little you are, how light you are, and what pretty little feet you have! Do you know, in all the crowd I saw you, and I saw your little feet." Madame could say nothing. She had forgotten all about the tarantulas. Often as she had passed the Croisille place, she had never dreamed that it had a wine-cloister and least of all that she would one day stand within it and hear a man praise her feet.

"I know why you don't talk much, Twinkletoes. You think some day I may meet you and recognize your voice. I never expect to meet you. You don't want me to, and I'm not going to try. And since I'm not ever going to see you again, won't you—just as a little souvenir of our—our escape—won't you lift your mask, here in the dark, and give me a kiss?"

Madame drew back in the close circle of his arm. She could not tell why she drew back, and the hand she lifted to push him away fell on her own breast

—she could not tell why. His fingers touched her mask—ah, such a different touch from Tony Taranto's—pushed it up, and quickly his own mask was off and his face against hers.

Roses! Roses tumbling over balconies, red and gold! Moonlight full of rainbows, full of perfume, full of nightingales' songs! All the old smuggled wine of the Croisilles flowing through her veins! For he had kissed her.

“You dear—you darling! You won't send me away. I must see you. I must know you.”

Madame was drawing down her mask. His words stifled her, as if out of the perfume she had caught a sudden whiff of desert dust. She made a little choking sound. His hand flew to the door. It sprang open, letting in the air. He stood watching her, forgetting to pull down his own mask. But Madame did not see him. Her eyes were closed.

And now suddenly the old cathedral clock began to strike—four—five—six. Madame was counting the strokes. Six o'clock! The hour when all the revelers must unmask. No mask may be seen on the street after six o'clock on penalty of arrest. Now she felt faint, indeed.

“Pliz see if—” Madame made a gesture toward the street—“pliz see if we can go.”

He opened the door wider, stepped out, listened. He crossed the court and went to the open gate.

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Madame straightened herself. Then she slipped out the door and ran to the back entrance of the court, keeping close to the wall. She ran through a passage and into the open back door of a little curio-shop where an old man dusting cameos called out, "It's six o'clock, Miss. Tek care!"

Straight through she flew and into Rampart Street, then on and on with her heart thumping. If she saw anyone she would take off her mask. Ah, there was a mounted policeman! He was looking at her. Madame took off her mask. She walked slowly, keeping her face down. She gained her own gateway, took the iron key from her bodice, and unlocked the gate. Evening was already settling in the myrtle-trees. The parrakeet did not look around.

Madame went slowly up the little green stair.

But she did not go into Julie's room. She never told Julie a thing about it.

However, nothing very funny had happened, after all.

Lent is a dull time in New Orleans. It is always dull when the thing you have been looking forward to has just happened. All year New Orleans looks forward to the Carnival, and when the Carnival has been—well, one is at the very farthest point one can be from next year's Carnival.

Things threatened to be very dull in the patio

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of the parrakeet and the pussy-man tree. For one thing, Julie and her mumps were gone. First the mumps went, and then Julie. The nurse was gone too. However, the nurse had never been very enlivening except when she was angry, except when she had said so fluently and so cryptically, "You get my goat!"

And here was Easter on its way, and Easter brides. Madame was making some fine stitches for an Easter bride, a blonde young lady who came now and then and bade Madame embroider another butterfly *here*, or add a bit of filet *there*—as if *she knew*. But it was very pleasant work, and ten days of Lent were gone already.

Ten days since Mardi Gras! Madame embroidered tranquilly, though for three days after Mardi Gras there had been a sort of flutter in her hands. She had kept her mind on nothing.

Even now she wondered. Had Tony Taranto and his gang been lurking at the court door? Had he—the unknown masker—been caught by them, over-powered, never permitted even to come back and find her gone? Or had he come back, and finding the empty cloister, started after her, seen where she went? Would he perhaps keep his word and call?

It was during these first three days that the bride had come with her bolt of silk and Madame had taken the order. She had begun the embroidering

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too, though every time the gate bell rang—well, she embroidered very tranquilly now. After ten days nothing happens.

The gate bell rang.

Madame, sitting in the shadiest part of the patio, with the foliage of the pussy-man tree between her and the gate, did not look up as Bobo's sandals slapped their way to the gate.

"Is Madame Granet at home?"

Madame looked up. After a moment she rose and put down her work. She stood very still, waiting for her hands to stop fluttering. Then she came from behind the pussy-man tree.

He had a square, young chin and a clean-cut, rather large, young mouth. His eyes were gray—or blue, perhaps—and his bright-brown hair grew back in a straight line from his forehead. There had been such hope in his voice. The way he stood and held his hat had the traces of hope in it still. But now as Madame came out he looked tired. He sounded even a little ill.

"Is this Madame Granet?"

"Yess."

Her hands had quit fluttering. That sick note in his voice had left them very quiet. She stood there in her drab husk of a dress and looked at him.

"I'm sorry," he said, and turned. "I've made a mistake."

"But won' you come in?"

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Madame felt suddenly sorry for him. His gray flannels looked cool, but all men's clothes were hot. And it was a hot day.

"Won' you come in and res'? You look tard."

"I am tired," he admitted, stepping inside the patio while Bobo shut the gate. Madame motioned him to a chair beside the iron table of the patio. She herself sat down.

"Bobo, some or'nge-juice. And plenty ice."

The stranger brightened a little, laid his white Panama hat on the table.

"I've been walking a lot lately," he volunteered. "For about ten days." He stared up at the dozing parrakeet.

"You muss have come far."

"No. I mean from house to house."

"Oh! You sell somethang?"

"Well—at any rate I'm canvassing." Bobo had come with the orange-juice. The stranger took one of the tall misted glasses. "I'm looking for some one," he said when he had drunk a little.

"Oh!" Madame's tone was commiserating. "You loss someboddie?"

"I have lost—a friend. I don't even know her name."

"Then how you find her?"

"I don't know. But I shall know her when I see her. She may not know me, but I shall know her."

Madame handed him a palmetto fan.

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"How long you look?"

"Ten days—all through the Quarter. This is the last house. The *Madame* on your sign kept me from coming here earlier. Still, she may be a widow. It was the last house, so I came in."

"Why you not try up-town?"

"I shall, of course. But it was here she disappeared—and in this street. You see—" Madame's sympathy was too much, Madame's sympathy and the orange-juice and the shady, tranquil patio—"you see, Madame, it was like this. I met her at the Carnival. She wore a mask, and so did I. You know, Madame, how one can feel loveliness, even under a mask? Loveliness and—all that? She was so attractive that every one noticed her, even the roughs who don't respect the traditions of our Carnival. I had the honor to rescue her from some of these. We hid in the old wine-closet of the Croisille house. I used to play there and I knew the secret door. We hid there in the dark and—she was very close to me. I—had not meant to take advantage——"

"You kissed her!" guessed Madame.

"She didn't scold, or slap me, or anything like that. She just sent me to see if the coast was clear, and when I came back—she was gone."

"Did you not foller?"

"Of course. I ran out the back, the only way she could have gone, and through old Raoul's shop.

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He had seen her, yes, but Rampart Street was as empty as a vault. I met an officer who had seen her turn into Rondeau Street, but when I reached Rondeau Street she was gone. She would not have had time to go far.

"Madame, do you know if any of your neighbors went to the Carnival in a pink dress and a pink hat? She had golden hair. You make costumes. Did you make a pink dress and a pink hat for anybody?"

"My neighbors?" considered Madame. "How I know? I mek a pink draiss, yess. I mek him for Julie, my niece. But Julie ain't go de Carnival. She git mump."

The stranger took his hat. He sat silent for a moment, then he leaned forward, staring at the threshold of the nearest door.

"Madame!" he cried, and pointed. "How can you tell me that you know nothing when there are the slippers she wore? I would know them anywhere."

Yes, there were the silver slippers, sitting in a patch of sun. Madame had that morning, being left alone for the first time since Mardi Gras, cleaned them of the clay from the Alley and left them to dry.

"Madame," he continued sternly, and Josephine,

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now thoroughly awake, began sidling to the farthest end of her perch. "I know that she is in the house. They told me that you lived alone, but I know better. Let me see her." And as Madame herself showed signs of sidling away, "Please let me see her. I wish—I wish only to apologize to her." Then at the continued silence, "You do *not* live alone, do you? You have a companion?"

"Yess."

"Then let me see that companion."

"But look!" And Madame motioned to Bobo.

The stranger looked, and Bobo, disdaining to sidle, but disliking the look, slapped out.

"Madame, *what* is the mystery? I'm nothing but a plain man who wants to apologize. My name, as I should have told you in the beginning, is Phillips—Jack Phillips—and I live up-town. My uncle married a Croisille." (*That* ought to get her.) "Please tell me who the slippers belong to."

"Oh, dat! Dat is easy. Dey's Julie's, my niece."

"May I see her?"

"She is not here. She come for de Carnival. She git doze mump and stay home."

"Stayed home? Are you sure she stayed home?"

Madame was entirely out of English. She could think of only the enraged English of the nurse.

"You want kill her? Don' you know he's ketchin'? *You git on my goat!*"

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The stranger apologized. He drew closer to Madame. Madame had never seen gray eyes so shining.

"I won't contradict you, Madame, and I'm sorry to give anybody away. But most of the maskers didn't tell the folks at home they went. Dear Madame Granet——"

Madame had sat down, feeling weak after her outburst, and the stranger sat down too. He leaned towards her.

"Madame, if you knew how nice she was—how—I can't explain, but there in the dark I felt her innocence, her inexperience. And when I kissed her I knew—I could tell that it was the first time—the only time that ever—oh, Madame, tell me where she is. Let me go to her."

"The first one. The only one," said Madame softly.

But she said it in French.

"Well, it is fonny," she remarked in English. "Now, listen, Meester Phileeps. I ain't say he was Julie what you kiss."

The young man smiled and looked at the slippers.

"For one thang, doze slipp' hurt her foot."

The young man still smiled. Apparently he knew Julie better than did Madame.

"Be-sides, Julie have not doze golden hairs."

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"Madame, it may have been a wig."

"Dat is true. Well, now, I tell you where Julie live. Wet a minute! Set down. Now. Why for you want appologize? Be-cause you kiss her?"

"Why else, Madame? Why else did she run away?"

"Maybe be-cause she find somethang. Maybe she run away to kip it. Maybe it like gold."

"I wish I could think so."

"I tell you, do not ap-pologize. You mek it seem like—like just a lit' copper picayune. Be-sides, her family is strict. If you say you meet her in mask at Mardi Gras, they kip you off. I give you a lettre—how you say?—a lettre of introduction. I say you are my frien'. I tell them be nize to you."

"Oh, Madame, why should you do this for me? You don't know me, but——"

"I know 'nough. Be-sides, you are kin to de Croissilles. Wet! I write him now."

Madame went inside while the stranger moved about the patio, looking now at the silver slippers, now at the myrtle-flowers and Josephine. After all his walking he could not keep still. Madame came out with the letter.

"I'll ride out this afternoon," he said, deciphering the address. He paused. "And I've decided—I've decided not to say anything about the Carnival. Not unless she mentions it herself. She may not

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even recognize me. I'll not say a word until—oh, until a long time from now. I'll be just—your friend."

He laughed. They both laughed.

When the gate had closed Madame stood very still. Then she went into the big front room.

Jack Phillips, passing along the side-walk by the green blinds, heard sounds and listened. It was "Showers of Pearls" played on a tinkling old piano, played softly, bravely, gaily.

It gave him courage.

THE STAR OF EMPIRE ¹

By EUGENE MANLOVE RHODES

THE artist had been doing the larger aspects of Elephant Butte Dam to illumine the text of Our Special Correspondent. Awaiting now, in Dundee, the dateless return of O. S. C., he set up his easel before a gray and seamed *adobe*, once the Bar Cross headquarters—last relic of prehistoric Dundee, the “cow town” of the days before the big dam. The battered old house drew him irresistibly with its look of secrecy, retrospection: the same haunting lure of history withheld that had once compelled him from the hulk of a nameless wreck, high-stranded in the sands by Guaymas.

It was a rambling, flat-roofed building, thick-walled and substantial, degraded now to a warehouse and marked for present demolishment. By a lively irony it was to be replaced, of all things, by an armory. Even in its present low estate it preserved a dignity in keeping with the surrounding desert, which was somewhat lacking in its prosperous bourgeois neighbors. It had an inviting and

¹ From *The Saturday Evening Post*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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hospitable look, heightened by an unassuming comfortable gallery, overshadowed by a patriarchal cottonwood, once a goal far seen across the plain. The roof-high windows, broad and candid, revealed the wide, long rooms, the deep fireplace, the beamed, high ceiling. A dwelling for use and comfort, to live in and not to look at, built on so generous and prodigal a scale as to foster the artist's fancy that it had been fashioned of old for a race of careless giants.

Further yet his dreaming led him. It cleared away box and bale; it rekindled a flame on the broad hearth; it repeople the cheerful, firelit spaces of the great room with the resolute Titans of his fancy, returned from exile to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon.

On this reverie the workaday world broke harshly, a goodly part of prosperous Dundee pausing on its business way to express variously a unanimous amaze. Why did the artist lavish time and talent on the one blemish of their otherwise blameless city? Why, they inquired, did he not rather turn his attention to Burlingame Avenue—of tinted villas, gabled, turreted, dormered, porticoed, filigreed, beshingled and bestained? Further, they took it as a personal affront that the artist had willfully omitted all modern environment whatsoever, restoring the infinite recession of desert, its limitless, bare horizons.

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To all these the artist, a petulant person, made replies ever more waspish, so that the citizenry presently went its commercial way, leaving him, as sole adviser, a silently-enthralled person of six, Little Lord Fauntleroy to the last curl. Nevertheless, as this small person dug his ankle with a neatly-shod foot, casting furtive, sidelong glances at the unconscious artist, his resemblance to the common or garden boy was startling.

Vainly the artist strove to recall the lost vision. Failing, he began to rough in the tall yucca in the foreground, at the same time becoming aware of his one faithful adherent. The boy sucked in his breath, entranced to see the yucca shape and grow under the swift strokes.

"My! Isn't it a big one?" he ventured at last, wriggling with admiration. "It's twenty-eight years old."

"How do you know?"

"A man told me so. A man at the Armendaris Hotel. With a big red mustache. He planted it. And fenced it in so's cattle couldn't eat the stalk. When it was only so high. He told me about when he used to live here. I wish it was then, now."

"I wish it was then, now," said the artist sympathetically. "Or that it was now, then. But it's much better for the real-estate business for it to be now, now." He scraped diligently at an offending line. "Were you thinking of being a cowboy?"

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The boy extended his researches almost to his knee. His foot was now apparently quite dislocated. He peeped shyly through fringed lashes. Then, finding the artist's smile friendly and disarming:

"I'd like to. Or a brakeman. Or a painter like you. So I could paint Agnes Pauline."

"Ah, yes! Is Agnes Pauline your sweetheart?"

The eyes opened to their widest—gleeful, dancing eyes. He laughed derisively. "Sweetheart? Huh! She's my Jersey calf. 'Most a year old—and just as pretty!"

The artist considered gravely. "I very much need a boy to help me carry my easel—and—and do errands," he finished vaguely. He regarded the boy thoughtfully. "*I* might do Agnes Pauline for you if we could agree on terms. I usually get fifteen cents an hour, but I'll make it ten to you—taking my pay in errands at a fair price—if we can arrange the sittings for afternoons between two and three. Would that hour suit you?"

"Oh, yes!" said the boy eagerly.

"All right, sport, we'll call it a bargain. Show me where you live and then you can begin by taking the easel to the hotel while I carry the picture."

* * * * *

"The best town in New Mexico by a dam site!" said Hiram Yoast enthusiastically. "Four years

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old, fifteen hundred population, electric lights, telephones, high-pressure water, fire department, automobile stage line to the Dam and the Hot Springs and another through Palomas Gap, national bank, opera house, sanitarium, railroad hospital, fine hotels, soap factory, big brick business blocks, churches, high school, beautiful homes, six miles of concrete walk—and just beginning to grow. I tell you, Dundee has a great future! Perfect climate; soil will grow anything, with water. When it gets here——”

For completion he waved his hand over the grounds of the Armendaris, where grew all manner of fruit trees, interspersed with lawns and flowerbeds, bordered with trees of mushroom growth: the whole serving the double purpose of decoration and of advertising what the soil would do—with water. It may be said, in passing, that the Armendaris Hotel was owned and operated by the Armendaris Land and Realty Company, owners also of the Armendaris Land Grant and the townsite of Dundee.

Hiram Yoast had the prosperous appearance common to the burghers of Dundee. His once red mustache was grizzly-tawny; the thick mop of once red hair was gray. His feet were preposterously small and his hatbrim preposterously wide; worn, moreover, at a heterodox angle. His auditor was an elderly stranger of quiet and conventional ap-

pearance, who had caused much mirth in the Armendaris by registering as "John Doe."

"I thought the town was older than that," said John Doe.

"Of course, there was a station here before," said Hiram. "A store and post-office, a hotel and one dwelling-house. That's all. Just headquarters for a few scattered ranchers till four years ago."

"And the ranchers, the old-timers—where are they?"

"Gone. Some are in Heaven and some in New York. Scattered. California. Arizona. In the Mesilla Valley under the big ditch. Bob Martin is in Albuquerque, banker and Senator from Bernalillo County. But there's only two of the old gang left here now. Frank Bojorquez—sheriff—and me. And I'm going to-night, for keeps."

"Why didn't they stay?" said Mr. John Doe languidly. "Or, to be consistent, why don't *you* stay?"

Hiram ran a thoughtful hand through his mane. "I'll tell you," he said. "The first of all was when old man Baldwin—he's dead now—bought out the Bar Cross——"

"I *beg* your pardon," said the stranger. "Bought out the what?"

"The Bar Cross Cattle Company. He shipped out thirty thousand head, bought a few Chihuahuas to be growin' while the range picked up, and

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showed us how to build dirt tanks. Reservoirs to catch rainwater," he added, forestalling query. "He only built 'em for watering cattle, but they were the beginning of troub—of progress. To get water for irrigation was just a matter of buildin' bigger. A few of us took to farmin' a little for our own use. And then the nesters—the grangers—began to come, with a little expensive water from deep wells and a good deal of dry farmin'. Another thing. You see, them thirty thousand head had held the Jornada for the company——"

"The Jornada?" echoed Mr. John Doe, puzzled. "Excuse me, but what is the Jornada?"

"The desert. That is, not the desert exactly, but the *name* of the desert. The Jornada del Muerto—the Journey of the Dead Man."

"I see," murmured Mr. John Doe. "Sorry to interrupt. I have to do it to understand the facts."

Hiram resumed: "'Twas a mighty big range—one hundred miles by fifty. But that many cattle was all it would run, and the company didn't really own but a few watering places. There wasn't much temptation for newcomers on a crowded range. Once they was shipped out we all began grabbing the springs and lakes, and some of our old friendships went kerflummux. 'Twas like what Frank John told me about the break-up of the Holy Roman Empire—a lot of little states always scrappin' with each other.

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“Next, the railroad fenced the track from Rincon to San Marcial. The Grant had done fenced us on the north before. That made it bad. The little twelve-mile strip between the fence and Caballos Mountain was soon eat out, and there they was. All the grass out the east of the fence and all the water on the west except Aleman and Six Mile, both belonging to Baldwin. They began to go. Some sold to nesters, some just moved, and some stayed so long they had nothin’ to move. And the San Andres was all taken with goats, except the Moongate country. There wasn’t but one water-hole there, and the man wouldn’t let that go.

“Last comes the Elephant Butte Dam. Biggest in the world. It’ll make a lake one hundred and eighty feet deep and back water up for forty miles, when it’s done. And nine-tenths of the lake will be on the Armendaris Land Grant.

“Naturally, the Grant people found out that its river land was mighty valuable. They put up a big, steady howl to the Government. Finally, for damages, they got concessions to put in big pumping stations at the high-water mark, where it backs up McRae Creek, with an everlasting right to pump so many thousand inches a day over the ridge to the Jornada.

“The rest is easy. Water’s sure gold—when it comes. Waitin’ for the dam to build they organized the townsite company and put in a temp’rary

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pumping plant at the Rio Grande for town water and shade trees along the streets. They laid out the park and put in a few fields and orchards just to show what could be done—and advertised. This town is built on faith, hope and first mortgages.

“They got the Panhandle cut off Socorro County and tacked on to Sierra, and built a thirty-thousand-dollar wagonroad through Palomas Gap, where they’ve got copper mines. The county seat was at Hillsboro, off the railroad. They got it moved here by replacin’ the court-house and jail free of charge to taxpayers. Then they advertised some more.

“The railroad done its part. They always had a pumping plant on a six-hour schedule at Muerto Spring, to keep their trains movin’. They put it to doing thirty-six hours a day, built a park, a new depot, a railroad hospital, got the sanitarium to locate here, ran homeseekers’ excursions—and advertised. Best of all, they got capital to come here and start the Jornado Soap Factory. Best soap in the world, and ten million tons of raw soapweed in sight. Make paper from the fiber and roofing material as a by-product. I’m in it.

“So, here we are. Land with water rights selling for three hundred dollars an acre, town lots in proportion. That’s the way I got mine. I believed in it, sold out my stuff, bought land cheap and sold it——”

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"Dear?" interrupted Mr. John Doe cynically.

"Reasonable," said Hiram warmly. "This kind of farming is better than a device where you can bet on the weather. You can set your rain like an alarm clock, six months ahead, and have it go off on time to the dot."

"Well, say—I don't want to be inquisitive, but—why don't you stay?" insisted Mr. John Doe.

Hiram's face wore a perplexed and weary look. "I miss the boys," he said gropingly. "I'm lonely here with so many folks. They're right good people, but they're . . . different. When I think of the good old times——! We was a picked bunch, I tell you. The desert cut back the culls. We've made our mark. Even them that went wild went wild big. The Bar Cross furnished range bosses, sheriffs and crackropers and riders for half New Mexico and Arizona. Most of 'em done well, too. There's Burt Mossman. Up in Dakota now, worth less'n a million." He began to chuckle. "I'll never forget the time somebody shot through the window at him one night at the Toby ranch. The bullet smashed the lamp right at Burt's head. Burt looked round and said——" He paused for another chuckle.

Accurately, John Doe finished the sentence. "And Mossman said: 'I wish I knew who did that. I bet I'd make him pay for that window!'"

Hiram Yoast gazed at Mr. John Doe silently

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and long. Then he arose, lifted Mr. Doe by the collar and deliberately kicked him. "Why, you old fool!" he said affectionately. "Twenty years! How did you get the kink out of your nose? You derved old skunk! Writin' books—and plays! You always was a good offhand liar, but I didn't look to see you be a professional. Livin' in New York City, are you?"

"No. I'm farming," said Mr. John Doe sadly and shamefacedly. "I've sold my copyright for a mess of potash. Never mind me. Come to my room and tell me all about the boys."

On the way he ordered wet liquors. These arriving, they stood up.

"Wherever they are!" said Hiram Yoast.

"Wherever they are!"

Cole, Dallas, Charley, Cal? Scattered. Summerford? Dead. Billy? Dead. McCleod? Dead. Dana, John, Lon, Hartley? Scattered; gone. Emil, Jacky, Thorgood?

* * * * *

The sun was nearly down. They started for the depot with full and good intent to board the El Paso train. It was not to be.

By the Bar Cross house the artist was hard at work painting "The Start." Before his easel three ancient cowponies (friends of Hiram's), groomed to a gloss their happier days had never known,

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posed in mournful attitudes. Two were saddled complete, with coiled rope and branding iron at the horn; hitched, after the manner of all good cowponies, on honor, with dangling reins.

There were models human as well as equine; two men, painfully belted and spurred and cuffed and legged. They stood, foot to pack, frozen in the act of cinching a bed on poor Guy, most unhappy ex-cutting horse; who felt the humiliation keenly, drooping his head in resignation, groaning, rolling a despairing white eye.

"Oh, these Montgomery Ward cowboys!" said Hiram acidulously. "*That* ain't the way to throw a diamond hitch. Look here!" He made cunning readjustment. "You don't use it on just a bed, no-how. Get 'round there, Foamy, and we'll show 'em the N hitch."

The artist laid down brush and palette. Evidently, this was the real thing. He awaited developments with interest. It appeared that Mr. John Doe was "Foamy." They moved with a brisk vigor, a cheerful snap and precision at variance with their sedate and dignified appearance. That done, Hiram gave his hat a debonair tilt and looked for more worlds to conquer. His accusing finger fell on a tightly-drawn gunbelt.

"What's that—a corset?" he jeered. "That ain't no way to wear a gun." Removing the offending

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property he buckled it on, loosely, so that the gun hung low on his thigh. "Like that. Then you can get your field-piece quick when you need action." An impish look came to his face. "Suppose, now, that can——"

The gun was drawn, cocked. But a tin can, in well-ordered, swept and garnished Dundee, was unthinkable anachronism. The neatly-policed street smote Hiram's eye and brought him very suddenly back to the harsh reality.

It was too much. The gun barked thrice; on the near telephone pole as many insulators splintered to tinkling fragments; a severed wire curled on the sidewalk. The street windows blossomed with craning necks. Littleman and Rebel cocked their ears aslant; even the melancholy Guy looked up hopefully.

The artist spake aside to Mr. John Doe. "You two were cowpunchers?"

"Sure thing!" Mr. Doe jerked his head at the old *adobe*, "We were Bar Cross men!" In such chesty tones Saul of Tarsus proclaimed his nativity of no mean city.

"Thought so. Your name isn't really John Doe?"

The other shook his head. "My right name is O. B. Joyful," he said, and mildly divested the second near-cowboy of his artillery.

"I see," said the artist. "Go it!" Lighting a cigarette, he assumed the attitude of a disinterested observer.

Hiram had picked up the writhing wire and now held it to his ear, wearing the mischievous look of a benign and elderly goblin.

"Hello, Central! Give me Heaven! . . . Hiram Yoast. . . . Is the barbed-wire man there? . . . Wrong number? . . . Yes—oh, yes! . . . Good-by!"

He glanced around. Mr. John Doe gathered reins and cheekpiece of Rebel's bridle in his left hand, swung lightly to the saddle and raked his thumbs down the astonished Rebel's neck.

Rebel did a gruesome combination of bawl and scream, pitching as joyously as his poor old joints would permit. Mr. John Doe leaned precariously over and fanned the rebellious brow with a sedate derby. "Once in the saddle I used to go dashing, Once in the saddle I used to go gay," he chanted sprightly. "Lil-la-lee-li-lee-HOO!" The pitching ceased, and Rebel, much refreshed, went strutting proudly off.

With a reassuring nod and a friendly, wagging finger for the contemplative artist Hiram grabbed at Guy's neck-rope and followed on a ridiculous Littleman, who arched his venerable neck and pranced mettlesome before high heaven. Despite the ignominious pack, Guy seemed to have recovered

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a measure of self-respect. Pricking his ears, ignoring the lead-rope, he trotted jauntily alongside, nose to stirrup.

The train was coming. Far to northward its tiny feather of smoke rose over the long ridges. The escapade might well have ended at the depot had it not been for the portrait of Agnes Pauline. For after the sitting Agnes Pauline had been insecurely fastened, after the manner of small boys. At this psychological moment she made untimely escape, tore at a gallop across the sprinkled lawn of a terracotta bungalow, stopped with a sudden turf-plowing of forefeet and regarded Mr. John Doe inquiringly, flaunting her velvet ears.

"Ba-a-a?" said Agnes Pauline playfully, and fled hilarious down the show street of Dundee.

"A maverick!" Mr. John Doe's itching fingers plucked at his rope; the quivering Rebel plunged to frantic, unbidden chase.

Close behind, Hiram tore down the scandalized street, the abandoned packhorse in mad pursuit. Before the courthouse Mr. John Doe's whirling loop dropped on the luckless Jersey neck. Hiram deftly snared her hindfeet and she was down, stretched out, held by bracing horses standing at attention. Mr. John Doe unbuckled a bridle rein to tie her; Mr. Yoast, with unhesitating directness broke pickets from the courthouse fence for the branding-fire.

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A prominent citizen came puffing down the walk to stentorian expostulation at such wanton outrage. Agnes Pauline, freed from the choking neck-rope, bawled vehemently. Mr. John Doe, irreproachably clad, sat cross-legged and imperturbable in the street, whittling splinters for kindling. Hiram turned to the indignant citizen with an engaging smile. "Do you want I should bite my initials in your neck?" he inquired suavely.

The eminent citizen fell back aghast. Mr. Yoast, his aforetime respected associate in staid and conservative enterprise, had fallen suddenly quite mad! He fled to telephone the sheriff. Simultaneously from the courthouse came an apoplectic constable, to make swift arrest, with injurious verbal flourishes.

Before the terrors of the law thus represented the offenders submitted meekly, after a momentary flicker of eyelashes. Releasing their hapless victim they delivered up their guns. On the corner the citizenry gathered in tittering groups.

"Will you give bail or go to jail?" demanded the constable, thunderously effective.

"No bail. Jail," said Hiram. "Good old jail!"

They preceded him humbly, a pitiable spectacle—two frail and repentant old gentlemen. When the cell was opened, however, they exhibited certain symptoms of lingering waywardness, unexpectedly kicking their captor into the cell, resuming their

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guns and eliciting the keys from the jailer. Mr. John Doe turned the lock and absently jingled the keys in his pocket, heedless of the garrulous constable. Hiram took out a pencil and wrote largely on the outer door:

DUNDEE, NEW MEXICO,
Sept. 3, 1908.

First National Bank of Dundee:

Pay to Francisco Bojorquez, retaining
this check as voucher, money to pay for
what I break.

Not negotiable.

HIRAM YOAST.

He turned affably to the jailer. "Just give that to the sheriff and tell him Hy Yoast said, *Adios, compadre!* And for him to settle any claims. For one thing, there's three horses and some plunder we required from a painter-man. Tell him we're much obliged, will you?"

Curious citizens were coming up the walk. Hiram thoughtfully tossed his pencil in the air, pulled his gun and fired. The pencil vanished; the yeomanry dispersed.

Toe in stirrup, Hiram paused, bright-eyed.

"Where do we make camp? Mescal? The 7
T X?"

"No, no!" said Mr. John Doe thickly. "Not that way. Beyond the fences. To the Free Range!"

"The Moongate, then? All right. 'Yo!—ee—

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yo—o! E-e-e yo-o-o-o! My little dogies! Winter is coming, you're far from your home! Come along, Guy!"

Suddenly John Doe and Rebel darted after a supposititious recalcitrant steer, headed him, swift-wheeling, and brought him back in freakish triumph.

The sun was down. Peace brooded over the earth, save as acrimonious constabular comment floated brokenly from the jail. A spell of wizardry fell upon that cool and quiet street. Slowly, unhurriedly, they rode, deviously urging the drags of a phantasmal herd, with tolerant rope-snappings for laggards. From the upper balcony of an olive-green villa leaned a roguish young lady, laughing, rose in hand.

"Oh, were you cowboys?" she demanded.

They bared their gray heads. "Madame!" said Hiram Yoast, rising in his stirrups, "we're cowboys now!"

She leaned far over. "You dear old things!" she cooed, and tossed the rose.

To right, to left, the dear old things swooped down to sudden, alarming eclipse, leaving visible hand at saddle-horn, toe at cantle. The young lady screamed faintly. From the "pick-up" Hiram reappeared triumphant, thrust the rose in his buttonhole with an air, and waved gallant farewell to the representative of the lawless sex.

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Mr. John Doe, without looking back, opened his palm. On it lay a few crumpled petals. He watched them till the soft breeze scattered them idly; then rode on, still looking at the empty, passive palm.



Francisco Bojorquez, the sheriff, rode by the depot just before the six-twenty-eight train drew in, paused for brief hearing of excited reports and trotted easily after the marauders. Grizzled, but hawkfaced and lean and brown, the sheriff; still with the poised alertness of that Bojorquez who had been best roper, boldest rider, of the old days.

He hailed the peacebreakers just beyond the olive-green villa. The lady of the rose watched, wide-eyed. The unabashed culprits turned to him gladly. "Why, hel-lo, Frank! We're carryin' the herd to Moongate in the cool," explained Mr. John Doe. "Can't you side us? We're short-handed. Some of the boys is . . . gone."

The sheriff's eyes rose suddenly to the distant hills. "Sure thing!" he said, and cheerfully fell in beside them. Watching Dundee shuddered to its being's core. Equably, the sheriff flicked his quirt at a dilatory bovine wraith. This accomplished, he lifted his brows at Mr. John Doe.

"Been away, Foamy? Representin' the Bar Cross?" he inquired lightly.

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Representing? A dull wave of color swept to Mr. John Doe's face. Things forgotten, the pettiness, the shifty diplomacies, the compromise, the indirection of the twenty years he had been "away" flashed up to shame him. *Representing? Ah, no!* A Bar Cross man rode straight on what unyielding way he chose, be that way good or evil. "I've had . . . a lay-off," said Mr. John Doe. And this time his humility was sincere and unassumed.



The Honorable Robert Martin, tall, portly and severe, alighted from the six-twenty-eight to a Dundee of unwonted commotion. Two men violently insane! Sunstroke! There goes the sheriff after them! Desperate characters! Bank robbers! Escaped convicts!

The Honorable Robert pushed through the crowd to the accustomed stand of the "Scenic Stage Route," where a 50 H. P. touring-car stood waiting to convey to Elephant Butte Dam the United States mail, the resident engineer in charge, the Honorable Robert and any less-distinguished passengers. The Honorable Robert was just in time to witness the romance of the rose and the subsequent defection of the sheriff.

Near by, a skull-capped youth peered through a spy-glass. This the Honorable Robert silently

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commandeered by right of eminent domain. When he restored it to the indignant owner the Honorable Robert's face was thoughtful. Three Bar Cross boys! Forgetful of years and wealth and dignities the fourth Bar Cross boy sought how he, too, might obtain the freedom of the city.

By a freight depot stood a goat-man's supply wagon, ready loaded for a start betimes in the morning. Thither the auto-stage glided with the Honorable Robert in the chauffeur's seat. Negligently he threw out the mail sacks and began tumbling a various assortment of portable property into the tonneau to the amazed resident engineer. A keg of water, a sack of corn, a saddle, a roll of bedding. "Stow 'em any old way," said the Honorable Robert, calmly, to the resident engineer. "No time to spare." Flour, salt, coffee, bacon, a small chuck-box rattling with tin dishes, a Dutch oven, a coffee-pot.

"I guess that'll be all—oh!" With a beatified countenance he tossed in a bundle of cheap tobacco and cigarette-papers. Politely but unmistakably he ejected the resident engineer. The action excited comment. Men started to run that way. The car circled northward, gathering speed for a running start, turned back, squawking jubilantly. "Honk! Honk!" It rolled resistless through a line of shocked but impotent populace.

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“‘Come, open the Westport,’” caroled this blithesome legislator, “‘and let me go free, make room for the bonnets of Bonnie Dundee!’”

At the corner he slowed down and trundled placidly up the bewitched street, behind the truant adventurers; guiding the car with one hand and with the other cracking an astral whip at the leaders of a phantom team, with florid vocal encouragement.

Such a disconcerting and spectacular climax, this distinguished lawgiver thus stricken and wild, was too much for over-wrought nerves. Staid and orderly Dundee ran around in circles, uttering strange cries. Had the odor left by the departing car been that of sulphur rather than wonted gasoline it could hardly have left more consternation in its wake. Was there to be a reign of terror, a universal brain-storm?

But a few hardy spirits, including the mayor, the resident engineer and the curious artist (who, alone of them all, held the clew) procured another car and started in pursuit. On the outskirts of the town they came in sight of the fugitives, halted where once the Moongate Road bore quartering across the plain, straight to the Pass. Here now lay the Winthrop addition, fenced to protect the young trees along the graded but yet unopened streets.

Hiram and Mr. John Doe relieved Guy of his burden and threw it in the car; the Honorable

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Robert Martin handed something from the car to the sheriff, who rode forward, dismounted and cut the fence. Turning by the gap, Bojorquez saw the pursuing notables and waved his hand to the Honorable Robert. "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see any one coming?" he shrilled, and went his untroubled way, evidently confident that Sister Anne was equal to the emergency.

Sister Anne turned his head as the mayor's car took the brakes and ground to a stand. The mayor looked at Sister Anne. Sister Anne looked at the mayor. Sister Anne raised an open hand to bar further intrusion. "Go back!" he said dispassionately. His machine passed the gap and chugged stolidly through the violated lots behind the slow horsemen. They did not look back. To the arrested pursuit drifted a mellow refrain of mingled voices:

"Yo—o! Ee-yo-o-o! Go 'long, my little dogies!"

In the deep Pass the hoyden moon sprang radiant. Perhaps it was but her sorcery—or was that indeed the tossing of white horns, the wavy crowding of a spectral herd, gay, ghostly riders on lead and point and swing? Was that the creaking of harness, complaining of axles, borne down the wind where a dim-outlined wagon toiled behind? Slowly they crawled up the low slope, paused on the crest and were gone.

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The resident engineer drew a long breath. "Midsummer madness," he muttered uneasily.

"Plain drunk!" said the mayor bitterly. "Drunk as boiled owls. Shall we go on?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said the artist. "He said for us to go back."

* * * * *

On the morrow the sheriff and the Honorable Robert Martin sat in the lobby of the Armendaris with such serene and untroubled dignity that none ventured to question them. The incident was closed. As for the others, Dundee knew them no more.

The deserted car, woefully smirched and soiled, was found by Lone Cedar in Moongate Pass. Oven and coffee-pot sat by the dead fire; the beds were rolled and tied. In the tall grama a fresh, well-beaten path, littered with cigarette-stubs, made such a broad circle, as in old times, was left where a herd had bedded down; where, two by two, the men of the Bar Cross had stood their last guard.

BLACKSTONE DOES HIS STUFF¹

By TED DEALEY

I

WHEN the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad's fast freight whizzed by old man Charley Webb's farm one drizzly night in early fall and messed up six somnambulating cows so thoroughly that there wasn't even any salvage left, Guy Oates took his hat and coat off a nail and made a hurried trip to the Webb farm.

"Heard last night's train bumped off six of your best heifers," he said to Mr. Webb. "What're you going to do about it?"

"Sue 'em," responded Mr. Webb brightly and without hesitation.

"So I figured," said Oates. "'Most everyone does. It's a kind of habit. What were those heifers worth?"

"'Bout two hundred dollars apiece," grunted Mr. Webb, who had evidently given thought to the matter overnight.

"I mean before they were hit," said Oates.

¹ From *The Saturday Evening Post*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

Mr. Webb stared.

"Lissen, young feller, them cows——"

"I know what you're going to say," interrupted Oates. "They were all pure-bred Whitefaces and worth every cent of two hundred dollars each. Maybe you refused that for them only last week because you were planning to mop up all the blue ribbons with them at the fair next fall. Maybe you didn't. But if you think you can soak the railroad for twelve hundred berries for those six heifers, you've got another think coming. It's been tried before, but nobody has got by with it yet. Everybody around here knows you and knows you never owned anything but scrub cattle. You're entitled to some compensation, of course, but if you want anything from that railroad, you'd better come down off of that high horse and get reasonable. I think I can help you. It won't cost you a cent if I do. But I'm not going to take your case if I've got to make a jackass out of myself asking stock-show prices for a bunch of undersized heifers that couldn't even make the grade in a glue-factory. Let's talk sense."

"Well, them cows was wuth ever' bit of twenty-five dollars apiece, anyhow," mumbled Mr. Webb ruefully. "Ever' bit of it."

"That's better," said Oates. "If I get you one hundred and twenty dollars for those six cows, will you be satisfied?"

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"Well, yeah, I guess I would," said Mr. Webb reflectively, flicking at his off horse. "Kin you git it?"

"It's a gravy train," responded Mr. Oates.

"What're you goin' to charge me fer goin' to law 'bout it?" inquired Mr. Webb.

"Not a cent," said Oates. "I'm just taking your case for experience."

"You mean you ain't chargin' me nothin'?"

"Absolutely nothing."

Mr. Webb drew in a long breath and grinned. "Well, I guess you kin shore have the case on them terms." He clucked at his horses. Guy shook hands with him, smiling.

"If anything happens, let me know right away," said Oates.

"Shore," said Mr. Webb. "So long."

From the Webb farm back to town was only a matter of fifteen minutes ordinarily, but Guy negotiated the distance in less than that time. He went up the narrow flight of stairs to his office two steps at a time and drew his chair up to the desk briskly. For the next few minutes he bent over his work industriously. The ink flew under his fingers. Then, with a short exclamation of satisfaction, he gathered up his papers and, walking across the street to a little frame building which sagged under the weight of a big sign which proclaimed that this was the official abode of the justice of the peace, he an-

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nounced to that dignitary, who was seated within, that he had come to file suit against the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad for the value of six heifers belonging to one Charley Webb of the Midlothian district.

"Crack down," said Judge Baldwin, who was a man of few words. "I heerd about Charley Webb's stock gittin' plunked and I kind o' figgered somebody'd be in to-day to milk th' company fer damages. But I didn't figger it'd be you. Your fust case, huh?"

"It's been less than two months since I got out of school," responded Guy somewhat stiffly. "You didn't expect me to have all the practice in town grabbed by now, did you?"

"Nope—ner a long time from now," vouchsafed the Judge with a wry grin.

Guy flushed, ignoring as best he could Judge Baldwin's uncomplimentary attitude. "There's six heifers that were killed," he said shortly. "I want to file six separate suits, one for each heifer. I want to file suit for \$19.95 on each cow."

Judge Baldwin was surprised. He intimated in that spirit that it was something unusual for such a poor specimen of the bovine family to be immolated on the altar of transportation. He had been presiding over the peace of the community for many a year in that neck of the woods, but never had he before heard of anything other than a pure-

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bred cow, with a pedigree as long as the Seven Sutherland Sisters' hair, meeting the Grim Reaper at the well-known rendezvous between cow-catcher and headlight.

"Does Charley know this is all you're a-claimin' fer him?" he asked the young lawyer.

"He does," replied Mr. Oates. "And he's satisfied. They were only scrub cows and not worth much, but worth every cent of \$19.95 each. I'll get it for him, too."

Judge Baldwin glowed with internal amusement. The Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad had been a decided factor in the mortality rate of the livestock residing in his precinct for some years, but they hadn't paid off as yet at a rate to hurt themselves any. And here was this young squirt of a lawyer just out of school intending to hook them for full damages in his first suit at law. It was just too good. Judge Baldwin made a mental note of the joke. He prided himself upon his sense of humor and here was an opportunity to have a whole weekful of fun. He would let the whole town in on the big laugh.

Guy filed his suits in due form and walked back across the street to his little second-floor office. After executing a double shuffle and cutting a very creditable pigeonwing on the bare floor, he sailed his hat across the room toward a receptive nail and sat down, hugging his knees joyfully.

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For the first time since he had arrived unannounced in Cedarvale some six weeks ago, Mr. Oates was actually engaged in the practice of the law. The natural exaltation arising from this novel state of affairs buoyed him up for a few minutes. He itched for the battle to start.

But the high spirits arising from the first skirmish were shortlived. There was plenty of planning to be done. This thought sobered Mr. Oates and did much to dissipate the froth of his early enthusiasm. He sat down in the big chair at his desk and, filling his pipe, puffed meditatively. He was engaged in a very serious lawsuit and he knew it. The die was cast. It wasn't only the value of six cows that was at stake; it was Mr. Oates' entire future in Cedarvale. The case itself meant nothing, but his conduct of it meant everything.

Six weeks before—nearly seven weeks—Guy had come into Cedarvale with high hopes and great expectations. One by one he had seen them dynamited. Colonel Aaron Botts was the man who always set off the fuse. In short, in legal circles Colonel Botts was, in Cedarvale, the cat's step-ins. He had the whole countryside grabbed. For twenty years this august gentleman had occupied the chair of jurisprudence, so to speak, in Cedarvale. The majesty of the law was locally epitomized in his black-garbed, slouched-hatted person.

He had held undisputed sway; to him came, as

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if by gravity, all the litigation of the little community. His word was final in all problems of a legal nature, his opinions as portentous as the Delphian oracle. Mr. Oates realized that he had to put the skids under this gentleman or else transport himself and his shingle to more salubrious stamping grounds.

For nearly seven weeks Guy had sought a break of luck that might give him an opening wedge into the townspeople's confidence. No break had come; now he was going to manufacture one. He would beard the lion in his den, take the bull by the horns, meet the enemy upon the enemy's chosen battleground. Guy sat upright in his chair and knocked out his pipe viciously.

"Law!" he said to himself impatiently. "Why, damn it all, law isn't in it with politics. But I'll give it one big fling. If old Blackstone can do his stuff in a hard-boiled community like this, I'll wipe the dust off this town and give it a new start in life. But if Blackstone flivvers on me—well, I'm sunk, that's all."

II

The next day Mr. Oates had a visitor. It was Mr. Webb. He was the first man to cross Mr. Oates' threshold on a matter of business. Guy would have welcomed him with more enthusiasm if

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he had been a voluntary client instead of one he had had to rake in by main strength and diplomacy.

"Morning, Mr. Oates," was Mr. Webb's greeting. "Got any money fer them heifers yet?"

"No," replied Guy a trifle abruptly. The question seemed silly. "No, of course I haven't. You didn't expect me to this soon, did you? These things take time."

Mr. Webb placed his battered old felt hat between his feet on the floor, Texas fashion, and reached for the makings. He rolled a cigarette sheepishly and seemed ill at ease.

"Nope," he said candidly. "I didn't—not hardly, anyways. That's what I come to see you about. Colonel Botts was out to see me yestiddy. You know he goes to law fer the railroads in these parts." He scratched a match slowly on the bottom of his chair and eyed Mr. Oates uncertainly.

"Yes, I know," said Guy, stiffening. "What did you do?"

"Oh, nothin'," said Mr. Webb. "He made me a propersition and I told him I'd think it over an' let him know. I guessed I'd better see you fust, bein' as how you got th' case. I didn't think it was nothin' but fair to talk to you 'bout it. So I come to tell you."

"Did you tell Colonel Botts I was handling this case?"

"Yep," said Mr. Webb, "I told him that."

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"What did he say?" queried Mr. Oates. Mr. Webb colored slightly and busied himself rearranging his hat. Guy flushed. "What did you say?" he added hurriedly.

"Well, Mr. Oates," responded Webb, relieved, "I didn't say nothin' definite. But the Colonel offered me fifty dollars to call it all square. Don't you guess I orter take it?"

"Charley," said Mr. Oates, jumping from his chair and pacing up and down the room, "it's the same old game. You're just like all the other poor devils around here. You're going to let yourself be flimflammed out of what rightfully belongs to you because you're scared. You know damn well that those cows were worth every cent of what we're suing for."

Webb nodded. "Mr. Oates, I know they was," he answered. "But Colonel Botts says the railroad ain't got no time to be monkeyin' 'round in the co'ts. He says the sensible way to settle the thing is out o' co't. If I go to lawin' about it, he says, I probably won't git nothin'. An' I guess he's 'bout right. Lots has tried it, but it didn't do none o' them no good."

"Well, it's going to be different from now on," said Guy. "You tell old Botts there's nothing doing."

"Mr. Oates," said Webb slowly, "them fifty dollars 'ud shore be a lot o' help to me right now. My

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cawn got all burnt up an' my cotton ain't in yet an' times is purty bad. I know you're a right peart young feller, Mr. Oates, but I'm a little skeered that we won't git nothin' if we go on a-fightin' this thing. But I didn't think it was nothin' but fair to talk to you fust an'——"

"Look here, Charley," said Guy, "you are not going to compromise those suits, do you hear? I knew this was coming all the time. I expected you'd be in to see me on this very thing. But Botts has been running hog-wild around here long enough. I'm going to cramp that old bird's style or know the reason why. We'll make the railroad pay every cent. Understand?"

Mr. Webb opened his mouth as if to speak, but Guy wasn't through. "Listen. I'll make a trade with you. If we lose in court I'll pay you fifty dollars out of my own pocket. I haven't much money, but I can stand that."

Webb nodded dubiously. "But it wouldn't be right to take money from you, Mr. Oates," he said, "'specially seein' as how you don't even git nothin' if we win."

"Charley," said Guy, "it's not money that's worrying me right now. I'd pay you a hundred dollars before you compromised these cases. I want to fight them on through; I'll have fifty dollars' worth of fun out of it even if I lose. Stick by the guns, Charley. Is it a deal?"

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"Oh, shore," said Mr. Webb. "If you're so anxious, I ain't a-goin' to back down on you. Go on and pour it on 'em. I'll jist tell old Botts he kin go t'hell. I don't like him, no-ways."

"Put it there," said Guy, shaking hands cordially with Mr. Webb. "And when you tell old Botts where he can head in, give him my compliments along the same lines. You can't make it any too strong to suit me."

III

In spite of Mr. Oates' avowed intention of taking a fling at the law, no one would have believed he was prosecuting that objective with any ambition had Mr. Oates been judged for the next three days from outward indications alone. A thick coating of dust settled down on his desk and remained undisturbed while, from early in the morning until dusk of each evening, Guy sat quietly at his window and stared across the street. He smoked his pipe interminably and went out only for meals.

Al'ways he watched the door of Judge Baldwin's office standing obliquely across the street.

Guy's vigil at the window came suddenly to an end on the afternoon of the third day. He saw the substantial figure of Colonel Aaron Botts sloshing its way through the mud to Judge Baldwin's office. Guy slid his chair back into the shadows and

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watched interestedly. The colonel appeared genial, but dignified withal, as befitted his Prince Albert coat and his high calling. He paused several times between the general store and the hall of justice to talk to passing friends. He seemed to have a good joke that bore retailing. From his vantage point, Guy watched his slow progress down the tree-bordered walk. The leisurely amble of the colonel irritated him; he felt like rushing outdoors to give him a good poking up. When at length Colonel Botts had run the entire gauntlet of his admirers and had disappeared in Judge Baldwin's office, Guy paced up and down his floor with impatience, cracking his fingers in nervousness.

It seemed an hour before Colonel Botts reappeared at the door of Judge Baldwin's office and shuffled down the steps to the walk. He appeared well satisfied with himself as he wended his way unhurriedly up the street. It took him an interminable time to get out of eye range. Guy pressed his nose to the pane and remained motionless until the bulky figure finally went out of sight around a distant corner. He then snatched his hat and coat and rattled down the stairs to the street door. There he paused and his whole demeanor changed. He strolled indifferently across to the opposite walk and into Judge Baldwin's court.

"Has Colonel Botts ever done anything about

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answering those suits?" he inquired casually, as he entered and dropped into a chair opposite a disordered table.

"Yep," said Judge Baldwin. "He jist left a minute ago."

"Oh, he did?" said Mr. Oates in surprise. "What's the dope?"

"Wal," drawled Judge Baldwin, "nothin' in especial. He jist asked me if I wouldn't consoler-date them six suits you filed."

"And what did you tell him?" asked Guy.

"Oh, it don't make no perticular difference to me," sighed Judge Baldwin in a weary voice. "Botts allowed as how we might as well have it all over with at once 'stead of trying' th' same case six times. That sounds reasonable enough. I ain't hankerin' after doin' any more work than I have to. I got a lot o' fence buildin' at home to tend to and the old lady ain't none too sprightly, nohow." Judge Baldwin yawned. "I told him to come back again to-morrow. I can't be rushed into nothin' in this law game. You got to think things over."

Guy arose excitedly and slapped his hand on the table. "Judge," he said, "I congratulate you. I'm surely glad you were up to old Botts' tricks enough not to let him pull the wool over your eyes. He might gyp some of the hicks in this town, but he can't gyp you. Running to town all the time, he picks up a lot of these city-slicking tricks and comes

back here to try them out in Cedarvale. He thinks he's smarter than anybody else and sometimes he darn near proves it. But to try to crook a man of your intelligence! It's just not being done. I'm surely glad you stalled him off the way you did. You aren't going to let him take the bread out of your mouth."

"Wal," said Judge Baldwin, looking hard at Mr. Oates, "like I told you, I didn't give him no right back answer. I jist told him I'd think it over, but——"

"There," exclaimed Guy triumphantly. "What did I tell you! I knew you'd be too smart for him. I could have told you he'd be up to that trick, but I knew I didn't have to warn you about it. He's not going to beat you out of the fees in five cases."

Judge Baldwin dropped his feet from the table and sat slowly upright. "What?" he inquired, as sharply as it was possible for a man of his phlegmatic temperament.

"Yes, that's it," said Guy, leaning back in his chair and grinning broadly. "That old duffer thought he could slip a fast one by you. But you had him figured from the start. I'm surely glad that there's one man in this town, besides me, that knows his tomatoes. Consolidate those six cases. Ha-ha! And get only one fee instead of six. Ha-ha! By gosh, I congratulate you at beating old Botts at his own game! Shake!"

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The light that shone down on young Samuel could not have been more brilliant than the one that now crossed the seamed face of Judge Baldwin. He smiled an evil smile.

"They ain't many around here as knows the law like I do," he said dourly. "And they ain't many as has put it by me while I been justicin' in these parts." His face darkened and he added under his breath: "The old skinflint! So that's what he was up to!"

Mr. Oates arose and extended his hand again; Judge Baldwin took it and pumped it heartily.

"Any time you're ready to try those suits, judge, I'm ready," he said.

"They ain't no use delayin'," responded Judge Baldwin with some viciousness. "I'll have ole Botts in here to-morrow and we'll git 'em out of the way before you kin say Jack Robinson."

IV

Thanks to the masterful pleading, not to mention the left-handed diplomacy, of Mr. Guy Oates, attorney at law, Charles W. Webb, farmer of the Midlothian district, Falls County, Texas, was awarded judgment in full for each one of the six heifers he had lost through the rank carelessness and criminal negligence of the engineer in charge of Number 67, the fast freight of the Sulphur Bot-

tom and Northeastern Railroad. Six times \$19.95 came to \$119.70; and the thirty-cent hiatus between that and \$120 was too insignificant for even the needy Mr. Webb to worry over.

Colonel Aaron Botts was about the maddest man in Falls County when the judgments were returned. He had begun to simmer when Judge Baldwin refused to consolidate the six suits, and the heating process was a perfect success when full judgments were handed down in all of the six cases of the half dozen departed heifers.

"It's nothin' short o' plain hijackin'," fumed Colonel Botts. "Them cows wasn't wuth ten dollars, the whole passel of 'em. And if that low-life, Charley Webb, didn't stomp down his own bobwire and ham-string them heifers so's they couldn't help but git kilt, I'm a crawlin' rattlesnake. The railroad won't never pay this claim. You kin put that in your pipe and smoke it. We'll appeal."

"You cain't," asserted Judge Baldwin calmly, picking his teeth.

"Cain't!" exploded Colonel Botts scornfully. "How come we cain't? You'll see if we cain't."

But Judge Baldwin hadn't been taking a course in law from Mr. Oates for nothing. He fairly wallowed in his superior knowledge.

"You cain't appeal from my court in no case involvin' less'n twenty dollars," he said boldly. "Sure, Botts, you know more law'n that! Why,

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even young fellers jist out o' college know that much law. . . . Ain't I right, Mr. Oates?"

"Absolutely correct," responded Guy, grinning. He turned to the eminent attorney of the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern. "If Colonel Botts would like to see the law on it, he can step over to my office and I'll be glad to show him."

He looked at Colonel Botts in facetious expectancy, but that worthy exponent of the law was in no mood to indulge in educational pursuits. His face grew apoplectically crimson and he bent his hickory cane into a semicircle against the floor in a laudable attempt to control his embarrassment and anger.

"Make us pay, then," he said. "A lot o' good that judgment's goin' to do Charley Webb. He ain't got no more chance o' collectin' it than I got o' flyin' to th' moon. Jist try and git it."

With this ultimatum Colonel Botts stalked from Judge Baldwin's palace of justice in a towering rage. Mr. Webb, who was present in person, looked disconsolate, but Mr. Oates smiled.

"We'll get it all right," he said reassuringly. "Just wait and see. Anyhow, Charley, you don't need to worry. You remember our bargain. But the railroad will pay. They'll stall around a while, but they'll pay up in the end. I'm not bothered."

Mr. Oates was right. The Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad did stall around. In fact

they laughed raucously at Mr. Webb's claim and mentioned several places other than the railroad offices where Mr. Webb could go to get his \$119.70. At length Mr. Oates, his patience exhausted, decided that the time had come to take drastic action. He left Cedarvale early one morning and went to the county seat. Shortly after noon he returned and broadcast a message that he wanted to see Bud Connor, local constable at Cedarvale, as soon as that worthy could be located.

Mr. Connor showed up at Mr. Oates' office within the hour, looking bored. Mr. Oates shoved a formidable document into his hands and told him to go out and do his duty.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Connor, whose technical duties up until this time had not been multitudinous enough to complete his education as an arm of the law.

"It's an execution," explained Guy, "by Charles Webb, or in behalf of Charles Webb, against the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad."

"What's it got to do with me?" parried Mr. Connor suspiciously.

"It's up to you to execute it, to serve it," Mr. Oates elucidated further. And, as Mr. Connor wavered, he added: "You get two and a half berries for doing it."

"Oh," said Mr. Connor with sudden interest. "Jist tell me what I got to do."

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"That paper," Guy went on, "shows that the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern Railroad owes Charley Webb \$119.70 that they won't pay. Then there's some costs on top of that. Your two-fifty is part of those costs. You get it when the railroad coughs up. It's up to you to grab onto something the railroad owns to make them pay. The court will sell whatever you grab onto and Charley Webb and you will get your money out of that. All you have to do is to go down to the station and tell the agent there that you are the law and that you have come to levy on something to satisfy Charley Webb's judgment. Under the law he'll have to show you something that belongs to the railroad that you can seize for sale. You have to take what he tells you to—that's the law, too. The railroad has the right to say what particular part of their property you're to levy on. It's a cinch way to earn two dollars and a half."

"I gotcha," said Mr. Connor tensely. "Jist hold your breath till I git back."

Guy was not able to heed Mr. Connor's parting injunction. He felt like yelling aloud in his triumph and it was a temptation not easy to control. But he confined himself to a few fancy steps on his office floor and to the anticipation of Colonel Botts' dejection when the sad tidings came to roost. Half an hour passed, but Mr. Connor did not return. Mr. Oates grew impatient. Perhaps he

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hadn't explained to the constable the exact routine of his duties. As this idea grew, Guy looked thoughtfully at his watch and measured the distance to his hat and coat with a calculating eye.

He had just about made up his mind to go to Mr. Connor's assistance when that representative of the law appeared suddenly in the door. Mr. Connor's face was dubious, but his first words were reassuring.

"Wal, I got it," he said.

"Good!" exclaimed Guy, with relief. "What was it?"

"A engine," said Mr. Connor, anxiously noting the effect of this information on Mr. Oates.

"A what?" asked Guy, dumbfounded.

"A steam engine—locymotive," explained Mr. Connor at more length.

"Good gosh!" Mr. Oates dropped into his chair.

"It's the engine on the local freight," said Mr. Connor. "It come in while I was talkin' to the station agent. He told me to levy on that. I didn't much like that job 'cause the engineer and his pardner was settin' up in the cab big as life an' I wasn't hankerin' after no fight. Leastways with them guys; they was plenty husky lookin'. But I done it, anyhow. I got the engine."

"You got it?" asked Mr. Oates, despairingly. "Where?"

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"Leastways, it's there to git," went on Mr. Connor hurriedly. "It's a-standin' down in front of the deppo all steamed up and ready to go. Anybody that knows how to drive it can take her off. The engineer and the fireman didn't put up no scrap a-tall. When I told 'em I was goin' to levy on their engine, they jist crawled out o' th' cab and laughed and told me to hop to it. It was a cinch."

"What did you do then?" asked Guy.

"Wal, I took it. Leastways, I guess I did. It's there settin' right in front o' the deppo spittin' steam and smoke out an' nobdy in it. I got her all right."

"Well," said Guy, nonplused, "let it stay there a while. I've got to think things over."

"Cain't," said Mr. Connor doggedly, with a shade of anxiety creeping into his voice. "It's a-standin' on th' main line and th' limited is due thoo in a hour. You got to move it. The station agent says it ain't his property no more and he ain't goin' to be bothered with it."

"Hell!" said Mr. Oates, staring at Mr. Connor.

"He says if they's a wreck th' railroad won't be responsible," said Mr. Connor, finishing his story. "I would've parked th' dern thing somewhere, but I don't know how to run it. So I come here to tell you about it."

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"Damn!" exclaimed Mr. Oates with fervor.

"When do I get my two-fifty?" asked Mr. Connor.

But Guy didn't stop to answer the question. He went down the stairs two to the jump and dog-trotted down to the railroad station. It wasn't a great distance; Mr. Oates was there inside of three minutes. The station agent saw him coming and awaited his arrival with a broad grin.

"Come to git your property?" he asked with evident enjoyment. "There she is. Run her off that main track in a hurry, kid, or they'll be plenty of hell to pay."

"Can you run a locomotive?" asked Guy abruptly.

"Some."

"Here's ten dollars. Get it off the main track onto a siding and the bill's yours."

"Nothin' doin'," said the agent, with an even broader grin, though he eyed the ten-spot with longing eyes. "Want me to lose my job?"

"No, I don't. But nobody'll know the difference." Guy waved the bill temptingly. "Three minutes' work to earn ten big bucks."

"Cain't do it," said the station master with decision. "I'd git the air sure. Orders is orders." He winked at Mr. Oates knowingly and made a barely perceptible gesture toward the station.

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Guy's eyes followed the direction and showed him Colonel Botts' unmistakable figure standing at attention in the shadows of the waiting room. Guy shifted his eyes quickly and pretended to have seen nothing. The last person he wanted to see in the world just at that moment was Colonel Botts.

"Fifty minutes more an' th' limited comes through," said the agent. "They ain't no way to stop it. It's done left Garden City an' it'll be smokin' through here to Worsham in no time. Better git that engine off'n the main track before somebody gits killed. Th' limited ain't due to stop here an' they'll be a fine mess if it plows into that locymotive."

Guy looked hopelessly around the railroad yards of the little junction. Far down the hill a diminutive switch engine puffed and snorted as it shunted cars on the sidings. Nearer to the station there were increasing signs of activity as preparations were made for the reception of the fast freight from the east. The station master walked off to his work. Guy stood for a moment in thought and then approached the steaming locomotive that the railroad had so willingly relinquished in satisfaction of Charley Webb's judgment. He crawled into the cab and looked with distrust at the strange levers and gauges. Once he stretched out a tentative hand toward the throttle, but drew it back quickly. Running a locomotive was beyond him.

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He crawled down from the cab and surveyed his white elephant with bitterness.

A lumbering motortruck ground up to the station at Guy's rear and stopped with a squeaking of brakes.

"Bill out these here boxes to Wickett," said a gruff voice. "Shake a leg and gimme th' bill o' ladin'. I got two more hauls to make before dark."

"O. K.," came back the voice of the station master. "Jist one second."

Guy started suddenly and slapped his leg. He shot a quick glance down the tracks toward the switch engine that still labored in the distance at its never-ending task. He grinned broadly and fairly ran toward the platform.

"Hey!" he yelled to the station agent.

That gentleman paused and looked back. He smiled happily when his eyes fell on Mr. Oates.

"Just a minute," said Mr. Oates, with some excitement. "I've figured everything out and it's O. K. Make out your bill of lading and deliver that locomotive of mine over to that spur track that runs into Charley Webb's gravel pit."

"You're cuckoo," said the station master and spat.

"Cuckoo nothing," said Mr. Oates firmly. "Do what I tell you. I'm billing that locomotive out of here as freight."

"Freight!" exclaimed the station agent in dis-

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dain. "That ain't no freight. Whoever heard of sich a thing? That's the thing that pulls freight." He laughed, tilting his head back to get the full enjoyment of the ridiculous situation.

"You'll take it just the same," said Guy with conviction. "I'm offering it to you as freight and I'm here to pay for its movement in advance, if necessary. Take it or leave it. If the flyer smashes into it now, it's just your hard luck. Better snap into it."

The station agent ceased his hilarity, scratched his head and shot an appealing glance toward the waiting room. Colonel Botts strode majestically forth. There was a leer on his heavy features.

"Who's whupped now?" he asked evilly. "You levied on that there locymotive. It's your'n. Go and git it. If you don't, they's goin' to be a wreck here in a little bit and th' blood'll be on your head."

"Well, well," grinned Guy, looking Colonel Botts up and down with seeming surprise. "Look who's here. No, Captain Botts, you're all wet. The blood, if there is any, will be on your head. I've just ordered that engine billed out as a freight shipment. Get that! It's now up to the great Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern to do its stuff. I wash my hands of the whole business. I'm going on back up to town. By-bye. If I hear a big noise I'll come down and help you pick up the pieces."

Long restrained, Colonel Botts now blew up

completely. "You gol-darned little whelp, you!" he spluttered. "Git your engine off the main line. We won't accept it as freight. You'll go to jail fer this."

"Lieutenant Botts," said Mr. Oates, with gravity, "don't get reckless. It won't be me who'll go to jail; it'll be you—you and some others. Remember that the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern is a common carrier just like any other railroad. Drop into the office and I'll show you the law on it. You can't refuse a freight shipment. If you don't get that locomotive off the main track before the limited comes through, it'll just be one big mistake in operation. If anybody's killed, somebody's apt to get hanged for it. I hope it'll be you, and I know it won't be me."

With this parting shot, Guy turned his back on Colonel Botts and walked toward his office in Cedarvale.

"We won't take it!" yelled Colonel Botts at Guy's back. "You kin go jist straight to hell! We won't take it!"

"All right, corporal, it's your funeral!" Mr. Oates yelled back; and laughed loudly so that Colonel Botts would be sure to hear.

BLACKSTONE DOES HIS STUFF

V

Guy did go back to town, as he had declared his intention of doing. But it was not from motives of indifference. He went to his office and put in a long-distance call. Three minutes later he had his connection. The conversation was brief, but Guy hung up the receiver with a smile of content. Then he hurried back to the station.

Colonel Botts and the station master were still the central figures in the little drama on the platform. Guy noted that they were in heated conversation. The station agent seemed anxious, even nervous, but Colonel Botts was held by no such mild emotions. Fury seethed in his soul; he was boiling. The back of his three-ply neck was scarlet and he gestured vehemently as he expounded his position to the station master. The latter was deprecatory, but insistent. A curious crowd stood back at a comfortable distance, watching the proceedings with eager interest.

As Guy stepped upon the platform a small figure shot past him from the waiting-room door and scurried over toward the altercating pair. The agent bent down and took the call boy's message. It was evidently urgent; he hastened inside. But he was gone for only a few seconds. He reappeared in a jiffy at the station door and yelled something. Colonel Botts turned.

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"It's you they want!" he informed Colonel Botts.

"Who does?" asked Botts belligerently.

"The railroad commissioner's office at Austin!" sang out the station master, who had apparently suddenly recovered his sang-froid. "An' they said to shake a leg. They want you right now."

Colonel Botts knit his brows fiercely and answered the summons with defiant deliberation. Sensing something good, the crowd closed in, gathering in a knot at the window and pressing around the open door of the waiting room. They saw Colonel Botts enter the telephone booth and pull the door to viciously behind him. Only a segment of the colonel's person was vouchsafed the crowd through the pay station's dirty glass, but that partial view was enough. It was evident that the message he was receiving from Austin was not of a pleasant nature.

A few moments passed and then Colonel Botts emerged, streaming with perspiration which he could but partially stem with his large bandanna handkerchief.

But the Colonel Botts who came out of the telephone booth was not the lordly Botts who had dived into it shortly before. The angry flush that a few seconds ago had suffused his heavy cheeks had now given way to a grayish pallor. He glanced at his watch nervously as the station agent drew near.

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They compared timepieces and gave mutual hurried directions.

Ten seconds later, to the huge delight of the assembled throng, which cheered the performance ecstatically, Colonel Botts, with his large red bandanna in his hand, began pounding heavily down the tracks in the direction of Garden City to flag the rapidly approaching flyer. The station agent, in just as much haste, scrambled frantically up into the cab of the locomotive which had caused all the trouble, and began feverishly working at the levers.

But the crowd's eyes were not upon the amateur engineer. A much more sporting event claimed their attention. For Colonel Botts, against his will and better judgment, was turning in an impromptu quarter-of-a-mile sprint that couldn't help but speed up the pulses of the most blasé. Clad still in his Prince Albert coat and his broad-brimmed slouch hat, which he hadn't had time to doff for the occasion, the eminent attorney of the Sulphur Bottom and Northeastern plowed his steaming way down between the glistening rails, deaf to the jeers of the throng behind him, intent only upon keeping a tryst with the imperiled limited.

Twice Colonel Botts bit the dust as his flying heels failed to clear the up-jutting ties. In his first spill he lost his hat, but he got up and went on without it. When he went down the second time

the excited crowd at the station thought it was the end. But such a thing as throwing up the sponge was not included in the colonel's repertoire. He had a job to save, as well as a train. He struggled to his feet once more, recovered his fluttering bandanna from the right of way and plodded ponderously on. Those who brought the good news from Ghent to Aix strove no more nobly than the colonel as he took the bad news from Cedarvale in the general direction of Garden City. Gradually his figure grew smaller in the distance and then, simultaneously with the warning shriek of the approaching limited, it disappeared around the bend.

As Colonel Botts went out of sight behind the peninsula of intervening trees that marked the beginning of the S curve a quarter of a mile away, the smoke of the limited suddenly spurted above the branches of green. Then the round black nose of the locomotive shot into sight and the intermittent hiss of its air brakes could be plainly heard at the station. Colonel Botts had given the signal. But stopping a heavy train clipping it off at sixty miles an hour is no easy job in the space of a quarter of a mile. The crowd on the platform fell silent and watched tensely. The station master had proved to be a ham as an engineer; he still worked manfully, but the locomotive stood stolidly in its tracks. It depended altogether upon the engineer

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of the limited as to whether the side show would be tragedy or comedy.

But the engineer on the limited knew his job or else this would have been a different story. A scant fifty feet from the offending locomotive, the seething passenger train finally came to a jerky, grinding stop. The grimy occupants of the cab leaned far out of their window and hurled heart-felt and insulting epithets at the station agent. A small army of trainmen dropped from the sides of the long passenger train and bunched as it came forward on the run. And from the rearmost car a tall man wearing a silk hat and a Prince Albert coat dropped stiffly to the ground and walked forward hastily.

The milling group around the station master's engine had grown menacing by the time the man in the silk hat arrived. But his appearance on the scene had an instant effect. The trainmen fell back, whispering to one another. The tall gentleman strode to the center of the throng and glanced to all sides with a quick eye.

"Who's the old guy with the stovepipe and Mother Hubbard?" Guy asked a smutty brakeman who stood near.

"Sh-h," whispered the brakeman hoarsely, "that's Benson, the big brass hat of the whole works."

Just then the silk-hatted gentleman's gruff voice

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spoke in a tone of angry authority. "Who's responsible for this?" he demanded at large.

A thick blanket of silence followed this inquiry. Mr. Benson's eyes rested accusingly on the station master. That worthy looked down in sickly fashion from the cab, but said nothing. Guy relieved the suspense.

"Here he comes!" he yelled gleefully, pointing down the track. "Ask Botts—he knows!" All eyes followed his finger.

A hundred or more yards away a very dejected and a very dirty Colonel Botts stumbled toward the crowd. His head sagged on his chest, his arms were swinging low, gorilla-fashion, and his thick legs struggled manfully to keep pace with his on-coming paunch.

The crowd separated, grinning. Mr. Benson faced himself in Colonel Botts' direction, planted his feet wide apart and, with arms akimbo, grimly waited his coming.

Judge Baldwin walked leisurely to his office door next morning and glanced carelessly across the street. Suddenly his gaze became riveted. Young Mr. Oates was lying on his stomach across the window sill of his office, balancing himself perilously while he draped his black and gold shingle with festoons of gay-colored bunting. Judge Baldwin

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sauntered over and looked up. Guy met his gaze and chuckled.

"What's th' big ideer?" asked Judge Baldwin. "Think this is th' Fo'th o' July or somethin'?"

"No," said Guy cheerfully. "It's just a little private celebration of my own." And he added: "In honor of Mr. Blackstone."

"Blackstone? Never heard of him," vouchsafed Judge Baldwin. "Some relative o' yourn, huh?"

"Relative in law only," corrected Guy gravely. "But I always thought a mighty lot of him."

ISN'T NATURE WONDERFUL?¹

By OLIVE MCCLINTIC JOHNSON

LITTLE Boy Billy came up the steps bearing triumphantly a broad, flat canna leaf. His face wore the look of a discoverer. On the back side of the leaf, clinging by tenacious papillae, was an emerald caterpillar, distinguishable only by close observation. "Look, muvver," he said, and generously laid leaf and vermicular occupant in Lelia's lap, along with the rose, mauve, and amber silk threads with which she was embroidering, thereby innocently introducing a plebeian alpha to its patrician omega.

"What is it?" asked Lelia, smiling indulgently.

"Buggo," said Billy proudly, his hands folded behind him. He might have been another Columbus presenting his queen with the fruits of his voyage.

Lelia's first impulse was to brush the obnoxious insect away, but something in the eagerness of the flushed face stayed her hand. Billy was at the insect age which precedes the reptilian. His whole interest centered in buggos. Spiders gave him keen pleasure: he shrieked with delight at the beetles scurrying away to safety, when a board was lifted;

¹ From *Collier's*. By permission of the author and the publishers.

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he had already learned with bitterness the fallacy of the theory of the harmlessness of white-faced bumblebees, and beetles pleased him most of all. Sometimes he found them on the stems of hollyhocks, but the surest place was in the hearts of sunflowers. It was a pretty sight to see the little fellow standing atiptoe, straining to draw down the topmost blossom in which he searched eagerly for a concealed buggo. Insects were all buggos to him, and all were delightful. He had discovered a new specimen. "Where did you get it?" asked Lelia, simulating interest.

"'Westes finded it. He said the wind wocked it to s'leep in its cwadle."

Lelia's eyes kindled. Her appreciative glance rested upon Orestes, who worked faithfully mowing the lawn. The humble toiler had not been too busy to feed her small boy's fancy. Could she do less? She tossed her work aside and lifted Billy to her knee.

"It's a beautiful buggo," she said, trying to make up in warmth all that her response had lacked in spontaneity.

Billy was delighted. "You almos' couldn' see it, at first, could you, muvver?"

"No," admitted Lelia. "You see, it is so green, just the color of its cradle."

Then she told him how Nature often gives her children colors that beguile the eye—colors so like

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the surrounding environment that the small creatures are protected and able to elude and escape man, their natural enemy. With all his brains and his ability to think, man frequently overlooks and is deceived entirely by the simple unthinking creatures, colored by the hand of Nature.

Lelia's exposition of the theory of Protective Coloration had a sympathetic audience of two. For, unobserved by her, Orestes had dropped his work and edged nearer, drinking it all in. His interest was hardly less than Billy's.

"And sometimes," Lelia went on, "naughty creatures are protected by their color. In West Texas there are rattlesnakes just the color of the rocks, and I've heard of people in Louisiana and Arkansas sitting down on old logs that turned out to be alligators."

"Blooley!"

The exclamation came suddenly from Orestes, who had turned goggle-eyed at the startling revelation. Lelia looked up in surprise. She smiled at the emotional imagination of her colored servitor.

"How much have you heard of what I said, Orestes?"

"I heached it all, Miss Lelia, an' iffen you'll 'scuse me I wan' to ax des one mo' li'l question."

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"What is it?"

"If it warn't fo' dey cullah, dey'd all been daid long ago, wouldn' dey—dem snakes an' alligators an' varmints an' sich? De white men would 'a' kilt 'em sho?"

"I expect so."

"Dey cullah is what saves 'em, den, ain't it?"

"Yes, that's just what I've been telling you. It's the theory of Protective Coloration, and"—she glanced downward at the inert, relaxed figure in her lap—"I see part of my audience has fallen asleep." Lelia arose and bore the little fellow, still tightly clasping the leaf, indoors.

Orestes had a way of storing novel thoughts in his mind, not knowing what eventualities might wake them into usefulness. With an entirely new idea for rumination, he turned back to his waiting lawn mower. As he propelled it back and forth he entertained himself mightily. To the tune of the revolving blades he chanted his monologue: "Cain' nuttin' happen to 'em. White man cain' git 'em! Nobody cain' git 'em! Hit's on account o' dey cullah. De Lawd gin 'em dey cullah. Bress de Lawd! If you set down on one ob 'em, it's a alligator, an' iffen 'tain't a alligator, hit's a snake. Whoopee! Be keerful whar you sets. Dey cullah pertecks 'em."

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The Leaf Motor Car Company received a package by express that afternoon which had been eagerly awaited. It contained a shipment of curtain rods. The automobile factory had been behind with production, so that it only turned out essentials. Small accessories like nickel curtain rods had to wait. They were cleverly devised standards, made to fit upright into sockets on the doors and support the storm curtains, so that occupants of the car could enter or leave without the trouble of unfastening the curtains.

Every Leaf sold in weeks had been sold with the provision that the curtain rods should be supplied later. This had been quite satisfactory to all the buyers with the exception of Mr. Montgomery. Mr. Montgomery—familiarily called Monty—was the manager of the George Hotel. He had never owned a car before and he had always longed to. So when the time came, finally, that made him the proud possessor of a Leaf, he wanted it complete. Not that there was any necessity for the use of curtains—it was midsummer, and the sky had not so much as entertained the suspicion of a cloud for a month—but human nature came to the fore in Mr. Montgomery. He had no use for curtain rods, but he was entitled to them and he wanted them. So, on an average of once a day, he telephoned the Leaf Motor Car Company to ask if the rods had arrived. It was the office joke—the

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missing rods and the murmuring Monty. It irked Mr. Holmes. To have his telephone rung continually on the inconsequential business was annoying.

When Orestes reached the shop, following the completion of his morning's lawn mowing, one of his co-workers confided that matters were at a sad state in the office.

"Mist' Bill is sho got de distempah!"

"'Count o' which?" asked Orestes.

"Dat Mistuh Monty maddened him ag'in."

"Oveh dem curtum rods," said Orestes with swift intuition.

"Yeah."

"Umphm-m! I wisht cahs wuz bawned widout no curtums."

So, it may be easily understood with what satisfaction Orestes received the express package and bore it triumphantly to his employer. "Mist' Bill, Santa Claus is came," he announced happily.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Holmes shortly.

"Dem curtum rods."

"Praise be!" came the fervent response. "Here, take a set of them round to the George Hotel to Mr. Montgomery, quick!"

"Yassuh."

"Go at once. Stop whatever you are doing."

"Yassuh."

"And see that he gets them," added Mr. Holmes.

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"Don't trust them to anybody else. Put them in Monty's hands. Don't come back till you've done it."

"Naw, suh."

"What?"

"Yassuh."

"All right. Go!"

Orestes cranked the truck and started. It was only the distance of a few blocks to the hotel, but his master had counseled haste and, besides, he seldom went anywhere without the truck. He would deliver Mr. Monty's rods in a jiffy and return to the shop in haste to attend the more patient purchasers, who also awaited the belated equipment. This was a definite plank in Orestes' platform, but definite planks are sometimes lost in the perilous journey between their providing and their performing. The shop saw Orestes no more that day.

Mr. Holmes was really to blame. The curt insistence of his final instruction to Orestes caused the abscondence. How could his porter put the rods into Mr. Monty's hands when Mr. Monty was not there? How could Orestes return until he had fulfilled his mission? Mist' Bill had said stay, and stay he would—a modern colored Casa-bianca.

where Mr. Monty was or when he would return.

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Orestes waited. Not feeling quite at ease in the splendor of the gilded lobby, he betook himself to the basement. There was always the likelihood of finding some acquaintance among the constantly changing cooks and waiters. Orestes was not disappointed. As he passed the swinging doors of the kitchen and perceptibly slackened his pace to catch more fully the tantalizing odors, the doors opened and a familiar white-clad figure emerged, bearing a huge meat knife. It was Hosea Hupp.

"Name o' goodness, Hosea! What you doin' heah?"

"I's de 'sistant to de chef cook," grinned Hosea proudly.

"Is you? An' whar you gwine wid dat cleavah?"

Hosea's glance rested fondly on the giant snickersnee. "Dat's some baby, ain't it? Hit's mine. De hotel don' funnish 'em no mo'. When you comes to git a job as chef cook now, you brings yo' own knives wid you—des de same as a cahpenteh an' his tools. Hit's de only way; den eve'body kin hab de kine what's bes' suited to his han'."

"But whar is you gwine wid yo' chef-cook cleavah?"

"Hit's a li'l game," whispered Hosea. "While Mistuh Monty is gone de boys is habin' a li'l game in de sample room. Me an' de cleavah is gwine jine in."

"Me too," said Orestes, forgetting his errand and

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the fact that it was always such accidental pleasuring that got him into trouble.

In the sample room was a motley crowd—cooks, waiters, bellmen, and baggagemen. The hotel's entire colored personnel, with the exception of the chambermaids and elevator girls, was grouped in expectant eagerness. Added to these were as many outsiders, drawn from the neighboring garages and shops by the glad word, mysteriously passed, that the bones were rolling. It was easily the largest indoor golf party that Orestes had attended recently, and many of the gamesters were his friends—Eliphilate Luck, Hiawatha Bones, Sloofoot Jackson, and Mannie Blair. The last-named came upon him suddenly. "Dawg-gone, Rest Ease!" he exclaimed gladly. "I wuz des fixin' to sen' afteh you."

"Wisht you had, Mannie," said Orestes regretfully, "so's I could 'a' brung some money. I is clean broke."

"Too bad, but you'll make a good man to hol' de stakes," averred Mannie. "Dat's safer'n playin', anyhow, 'caze ole Lif' Laig is in de game, an' de stakes is gwine be high."

Orestes's curiosity momentarily overcame his disappointment. "How come you is heah, Mannie? Is you wukkin'?"

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"Me? I ain', to say, wukkin'. I is de de haid waiteh!" he responded proudly.

"Naw?"

"Yes, I is. Ole Pompey Snow, what's been in all dese yeahs, is sick, an' I taken his place."

"What's de matteh wid ole Pompey? De Jawdge *Ho*-tel wouldn' be de Jawdge *Ho*-tel wid-out no Pompey."

"Dat's right," admitted Mannie. "Dey's sum'p'n de matteh wid his laig. I don' rightly knows what 'tis."

"Mebbe hit's de pel-laig-ra," suggested Orestes with ready sympathy.

"Umphm-m! I 'speck so. I wisht he would come back. I's gittin' tiahed of de job. You don' gits no tips hardly atall—not nuttin' lak des a plain waiteh. Look at dem birds dar flashin' dey rolls—eve'y cent was made in tips."

It was an opulent crowd. The high wages and easy money of the times were revealed in visible wealth of cash and clothes. Hardly a man did not bear a sizable roll and few who did not wear silk shirts. Orestes took the position of stakeholder, to which he had been unanimously elected, without a qualm as to his rough clothing, but he did find himself envying the boys who had money and were now crooning and chanting the mystic words of crap lore:

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"Come seben. Umphm-m! Heah I is—Li'l Joe. Shoots ten. Fade me!"

"Whar is you, Big Dick? Come on. Baby needs shoes. Be right. Oh, oh, busted molasses jug!"

"I got you faded. Hop along, Sistuh Mary! Come to me—dat's my honey chile! Whoo-ee-ee! 'Leben! Lady luck! You b'long to me!"

There was one of Orestes's friends to whom Lady Luck did not belong. This was Sloofoot. His luck with the galloping cubes was proverbially nil.

"Look at 'im," whispered Mannie, nudging Orestes. "He cain' shoot no mo'n nuttin'."

Orestes glanced at the consistent loser whose ill luck was most apparent. His teeth were clenched and his eyes drawn into mere slits with the intensity of his gambling fervor.

"What meks him presist?" he asked.

"Sloofoot is de kine," explained Mannie, "what'll spit at a crack fo' all he's got, an' he doan nevah do wins. Look at old Lif' Laig, he's des habin' his fun outa dat boy. He's already got all Sloofoot's money an', fo' de game is oveh, Sloofoot'll hab to borry his own clo'es to git home in."

Now, Hosea was more aggressive in his methods. Without any wish to express dubiety or discontent at Eliphilate's method of rolling the square babies, he, nevertheless, placed his cleaver in a conspicuous position. And, if Eliphilate did so much as slack in his "shakin' befo' de shootin'," one sug-

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gestive glance from Hosea in the direction of the weapon was sufficient to cause Eliphilate's swift repentance and a mending of his ways. In consequence, Hosea was winning. Orestes marveled at the richness of his imagination.

"Shake, rattle, and roll, des de same as a truck! An' I's a ridin' in it. Heah I come! Git outa my way! Gwine to jail! Who'll pay my fine? De square babies!"

Hosea was in the way of becoming a prophet, but he did not know it. He was too intent upon his winnings and his triumphant chant. Orestes, expanding in the aura of the game, was seized by an unconquerable desire to take part. It made him restless. He recalled that Slicker Ball, the boot-black at the corner, owed him a small sum. He felt that if he had it he could double, treble, even quadruple his money. The sight of Hosea's winnings unnerved him. He started up hastily. He would seize the unusual opportunity of winning from Eliphilate, the professional gambler of Deep Ellum.

"Mannie, you watch de game. I's gwine git a dollah an' fo' bits from a guy what owes me, an' come back an' git in de game 'ginst old Lif' Laig."

He hurried up in the east elevator. As he did so, down in the west elevator came the officers. They had sensed the game, as officers have a way of

doing, and the surprise was complete. They bagged the whole party and, when Orestes hurried back, money in hand, were loading the malefactors in the police wagon. Orestes could scarce believe his eyes. He felt like the boy who had been asleep when the circus parade came off. The lovely game was over and he had missed taking part. It did not occur to him to rejoice at his accidental escape from arrest. He looked at the money in his hand and groaned.

An officer accosted him. "Boy, is that your truck standing by the curb?" Orestes nodded. "Well, I'll have to borrow it. There's so many of these bloomin' crap shooters, I can't get 'em all in the wagon."

Orestes came to life suddenly. "Yassuh, yassuh," he said, "I'll go 'long to drive." . . .

That evening, after dinner, Orestes sauntered around the house, across the neatly manicured lawn, to where Mr. Holmes sat smoking. He had "thought left and thought right," as the Chinese say, and the result of his excogitations was that this was the best method of approach, in a difficult matter requiring great diplomacy. After dinner was good, and the soothing effect of a half-smoked cigar better. Besides, the drama was to be staged on an irreproachable lawn, made so by his own painstaking efforts. Mist' Bill could not fail in

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tractability with all this and especially the neat verbal approach which Orestes had selected.

"Mist' Bill, is you got any mo' dem curtum rods?" he asked airily.

Mr. Holmes looked up from his newspaper. "Cur-tain rods? Yes, I think so."

"Wal, I'll hatter git you to tooken a set outa my pay," said Orestes blandly.

"Take a set out of your pay? What for?" Mr. Holmes began to frown with returning consciousness of his porter's unexplained A. W. O. L.

Orestes avoided his master's eyes and replied meekly: "To give to Mistuh Monty."

The effect of the revelation was electrical. "Didn't you deliver Monty's rods?" demanded Mr. Holmes.

"Yassuh, yassuh, I delivered 'em," answered Orestes, batting his eyes swiftly as if expecting a blow, "but he didn' lak 'em."

Mr. Holmes tossed away his cigar. "Didn't like them! What was wrong?"

His employer was not reacting as Orestes had expected; he almost whispered his reply: "Dey wuz bent."

"Bent?"—incredulously.

"Yassuh, a aksumdent happen to dem curtum rods."

Mr. Holmes had rolled his newspaper into a

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club, and he now used it to emphasize his words. "Look here, boy," he said, shaking the paper, "you're holding something back. Now, you might as well tell me the whole thing. Out with it! Where were you all afternoon? Come clean!"

When Mist' Bill used that tone there was no use in further parley. Orestes sighed. To have all his elaborate approach come to naught! He took his seat on the steps. "Mist' Bill," he began, "in de fu'st place, I got 'rested."

"I knew it," said Mr. Holmes, looking down at him reproachfully.

"Yassuh, 'rested three times. Naw"—Orestes corrected himself punctiliously, "naw—des two times an' a half."

"Arrested two times and a half!"

"Yassuh."

Mr. Holmes shook his head in a baffled manner and motioned for Orestes to proceed. Speech had temporarily forsaken him. The kinks in a negro's brain were sometimes too much for even the clever manager of the Leaf Motor Car Company.

"You recumleck you tolt me to take Mistuh Monty's curtum rods to 'im—an' put 'em in his han's?"

"I certainly did, and it shouldn't have taken you more than ten minutes. That's the trouble with you, Orestes, you're weak on the wind-up. You have yet to learn that your errand is not finished until you

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report back to the shop. Think back over most of your troubles lately, and you'll find that they resolve themselves into failure to return——”

Orestes turned a chiding eye upon his employer.

“Mist' Bill, how could I return till I put 'em in his han's, an' how could I put 'em in his han's when his han's wuzn't dar?”

“Where were his hands?” thundered Mr. Holmes.

“I don' rightly knows—whareveh Mistuh Monty was, I speck,” answered Orestes with Joblike patience. “Don' nobody in de *ho-tel* know whar he is, so I hatter des stall aroun' an' wait——”

“‘Serene I fold my hands and wait,’” quoted Mr. Holmes with mock serenity.

Orestes looked up quickly, surprised at the uncanny prescience of his boss. “Yassuh, dat's 'zackly how come I come to git jugged! It wuz dat yaller gal, Sereny, what runs de elevator. She say she thunk Mistuh Monty is in de basement, so I rid down wid her, but he warn't dar atall—hit wuz some cullud boys,” finished Orestes with an apprehensive glance, which Mr. Holmes was not slow to recognize as a path leading from the maze.

“What were they doing?” he asked.

“Shootin’,” said Orestes, naively taking off the curse of gambling by his choice of terms.

“And you joined them,” added Mr. Holmes, taking up the story.

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Orestes shook his head emphatically. "Naw, suh. I nevah had no money. I des helt de stakes."

"Then you got arrested," continued Mr. Holmes.

"Naw, suh, not to say 'rested. De offumcers, dey tuck de truck to carry de boys to jail in, 'kaze dey wuz fifty-fo' an' couldn't all ride in de Black Maria. An' I des go 'long to keep de truck comp'ny an' see don' nobody monkey wid de engine."

"That was the time you were only half arrested?"

"Yassuh."

"When was the next time?"

"It wuz 'count o' de stake money. Time I got th'oo payin' dem niggahs fines, dar wuz fo' dollahs an' six bits lef". An' don' nobody rightly know who it b'longs to, so all of us went in de alley an' wuz rollin' fo' it—when we got pinched ag'in!"

"I see," said Mr. Holmes, inwardly chuckling. "This was a full arrest, I take it?"

"Yassuh—cumplete."

"Fifty-four," mused Mr. Holmes. "Pretty well-filled jail, wasn't it?"

"Yassuh. Dey wuzn't room fo' no mo' 'sep'n two tramps what wuz put in dar dey say fo' fragrancy."

"Hurrah," laughed Mr. Holmes. "Well, how did the boys get out that time?"

"Law, suh, dey had to git out de bes' way dey could. Some o' dem birds is in dar yet. But eve'yone what had a boss or a wife got out. Mistuh

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Monty, he come down an' picked out his'n hisse'f."

"Hand-picked, eh?"

"Yassuh," Orestes went on, oblivious of the irony. "All de bell hops an' cooks an' waitchs in de *ho-tel* wuz dar. It wuz either pay dey fine an' git 'em out, or shut up de *ho-tel*."

"I see. Monty just gave the rest of them cursory notice, I suppose."

"Suh?"

"Cursory notice, I said."

"Yassuh, dat wuz it 'zactly. Cussery! I ain' nevah is heahed sich langwidge! I could feel de skin on my back cu'lin' up an' peelin' off. He sho do wag a wicked tongue, dat Mistuh Monty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst unexpectedly from Mr. Holmes. Orestes looked up surprised. It was always a good sign when his master laughed. Mr. Monty's profanity, as he had cause to know, was no laughing matter, but Orestes was not one to cavil. He took what the gods provided and smiled back at Mist' Bill.

"Well, go on and tell me about the third time you were arrested," said Mr. Holmes, leaning back and lighting another cigar. He was now thoroughly enjoying the story with all the Southerner's indulgence for the negro's aberrations. "Tell me about the next arrest after Nannette got you out that time."

Orestes elevated his voice in polite denial. "Dat

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wuzn' de time Nannette got me out! She ain' had time to git dar yet. Mistuh Monty got me out dat time."

"Oh, Nannette got you out the *third* time!"

"Naw, suh, Mist' Bill," corrected Orestes with patient insistence. "Hit wuz de secon' an' a half."

"All right. Have it your way."

Orestes continued: "When Mistuh Monty got th'oo cussin' an' wuz linin' his niggahs up on de sidewalk, ready to march 'em back to de *ho-tel*, I thunk I would go up an' put de curtum rods in his han's. But, sho's you bawn, Mist' Bill, I cain' fin' dem curtum rods! I look eve'ywhar, an' finumally I went back in de jail to see if I lef' 'em in dar. An', if you b'lieve me, dar wuz one o' dem yaller, dish-faced, cimblin'-headed niggahs sellin' dem ve'ey curtum rods to a auto man fo' de price to pay his fine wid!"

"No?"

"Yassuh, an' I swoop down an' grab dem rods out o' his han' an' bat 'im oveh de haid wid 'em. Yassuh," added Orestes with contrition, "I fo'git all 'bout dem rods bein' new, an' I batted 'im hahd. An', fu'st thing you know, dem rods wuz all bent up, an' Mistuh Monty say he cain' use 'em."

"Of course not," howled Mr. Holmes. "But how about the boy's head?"

"Law, suh, dat wuz de leas' trouble. I ain' made no impreshum on dat niggah's haid at all.

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But de offumcer say we wuz fightin', an' I hab to pay a nudder fine!"

"Oh, that was the one Nannette paid!"

"Yassuh, Nannette got dar des in time."

"It would have been too bad to have disappointed her."

"Yassuh."

Orestes paused. He felt that he had made a good case; he awaited the verdict of the judge with complacency. But, Othello-like, his story being done, his master gave him for his pains a world of trouble. It was not any one thing which Orestes had done, but the cumulative effect of his misdeeds gave his master a sudden soberness.

"I wonder what I ought to do with you, boy?" began Mr. Holmes in a judge-like preamble. "Arrested three times in one afternoon!"

"Two times and a ha—" Orestes began in an undertone.

"Shut up! You're hardly out of one trouble before you're into another. It's hard for me to face the prospect of a long life marred by your foolish escapades." Mr. Holmes shook his head in mock dejection.

Orestes wagged his own head from side to side in amiable response.

"I wonder why I don't just kill you and be done with it!"

"I know why," answered Orestes politely.

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The surprising answer had much the same effect as a cold shower. Mr. Holmes looked up quickly, suspecting impudence. But there was no hint of intentional disrespect in Orestes's placid countenance. His statement was harmless. His employer had asked a question, and, as he knew the answer, politeness demanded that he proffer it.

"Why?" asked Mr. Holmes.

"Hit's on account o' my cullah."

"Color?"

"Yassuh. De Lawd made me black a puppose."

"Great Baxter!"

"Yassuh," Orestes went on, enormously pleased at the opportunity of unfolding the recondite matter to his employer. "If it wuzn't fo' my cullah, I speck I'd been daid long ago. Some white man would jes nachelly 'a' kilt me, de same as dem alligators."

"What alligators?" asked Mr. Holmes wildly.

"Dey's some at de Zoo, Mist' Bill," returned Orestes with the utmost composure. "But de ones I meks correspondence to is wil', in dem furrin' countries lak Arkumsas, an' Asia, an' Spasia an'——"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Holmes, impotently waving his hands. "You're crazy, or I am."

Orestes made bland denial. "Naw, suh, Mist' Bill, I ain' crazy. Miss Lelia tolt me an' Billy. De Lawd meks snakes, an' alligators, an' niggahs

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black a puppose." He smiled happily. "Dey cullah perळेcks 'em."

Mr. Holmes threw up his hands. "Can you beat it!" He caught the flutter of his wife's white dress as she passed the door. "Come here, Lelia," he called, "and see if you can make anything out of this fool boy's talk. He says you told him his color protects him."

"Oh, I know," laughed Lelia, as she responded. "He heard me explaining the theory of Protective Coloration to son this morning. Laddy had found an emerald caterpillar on a green leaf, and I told him that the insect's color saved it."

"I see," said Mr. Holmes, but the matter was still very obscure to him.

Lelia went on: "Orestes has made his own application, and I don't know that he is very far wrong. If he were a white boy, you'd have fired him long ago, but since he is as he is, you're going to hand him a cigar and forget all about it."

Orestes grinned with appreciation and looked at his master with confidence.

"I reckon you're right," laughed Mr. Holmes, reaching for his cigar case. "Here, boy, take this," he said, handing Orestes one of his favorites; "now, beat it to the garden hose and give this lawn a good soaking."

"Yassuh, yassuh," complied Orestes, jumping up with alacrity.

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A few minutes later he unreeled the hose and turned a fine spray on the velvety lawn. "He-he," he chuckled as he puffed his cigar. "Nachur sho am won'erful! I knowed I wuz safe." Then, with racial afterwit, he added: "Lawd! I is proud o' my cullah!"

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

MARY AUSTIN, author of *Papago Kid*, is an outstanding literary figure of this century. Since her first volume, *The Land of Little Rain*, was published in 1903, Mrs. Austin has written more than twenty books and plays. She has won distinction as short story writer, poet, playwright, critic and lecturer. Her home is in Santa Fe.

JOSEPH HALL RANSON, author of *The Awakening*, is a Dallas attorney. He began to write fiction shortly after leaving the University of Texas, in 1903, and in the decade 1910-1920 many of his stories were published in the better magazines.

WESTMORELAND GRAY, author of *Silent McTash*, is one of the younger writers of the Southwest. Mr. Gray, as many of his contemporaries have done, has divided his talents between authorship and the advertising field. His home is in Dallas.

BARRY BENEFIELD, author of *Ole Mistis*, has published three novels and one volume of short stories. *The Chicken Wagon Family*, 1925, was one of the most widely and favorably discussed books of the year. Mr. Benefield is a native of Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas, serving for a time as a reporter on the staff of *The Dallas News*, going later to *The New York Times*, with which he was connected for seven years. Critics of the short story have rated the stories of Mr. Benefield among the finest of the period.

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DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH, author of *The Drought*, is a native Texan, who has written and edited eight volumes since she became connected with the English faculty of Columbia University, in 1916. Her critical compilations and her valuable contributions to the store of American folklore have all but matched in importance the novels by which she is better known to American readers. The short story by which Miss Scarborough is represented in this volume has the dramatic quality which is characteristic of much of her writing.

WINIFRED SANFORD, author of *Windfall*, is now living in Wichita Falls. She removed to Texas from Minnesota eight years ago, and has produced her stories since she became a citizen of the Southwest. Most of her stories that have been published have appeared in the *American Mercury*.

JOHN W. THOMASON, JR., author of *The Conquest of Mike*, is a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. Following the World War, Captain Thomason won fame with a series of war stories which he wrote for Scribner's Magazine, to go with sketches which he had made of men in action. These were published in book form under the title of *Fix Bayonets*. A second volume, *Red Pants*, a collection of short stories, was published in 1927. Thomason was born in Huntsville, Texas, and was educated at Southwestern University and the University of Texas.

HORACE MCCOY, author of *The Devil Man*, has been sporting editor of *The Dallas Journal* for a number of years, and has made the production of fiction a sideline. In connection with his newspaper work and his fiction, he has been a featured Little Theater player.

A. W. SOMERVILLE, author of *High Water*, has revealed in most of his stories that have been published an intimate

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knowledge of the life of a railroad man, putting much of his own practical experiences into successful fiction. Mr. Somerville was born in Missouri, but has made his home in Dallas for the past six years.

CHESTER T. CROWELL, author of *Old Hawk Eye*, prepared himself for success in the magazine world by years of service on the staffs of newspapers in Texas, Mexico and New York. During the past decade hundreds of articles and short stories have been contributed by Mr. Crowell to the better periodicals. He went to Texas in childhood and, but for a period devoted to editorial work in Mexico City, resided in that State until 1914.

NORMA PATTERSON, author of *Glorious Dust*, is a native of Texas, whose short stories are familiar to the readers of the widely circulated household magazines of this country and of England. Two of Miss Patterson's war-time stories, *Unto Each His Crown* and *What They Brought Out of France* were included in a list of best short stories of the period.

THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW, author of *Her Own Room*, was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She was educated at the University of Missouri and at Columbia University, and was an art student at the Cincinnati Art Academy. Mrs. Winslow has made her home in the East for many years. She began to write stories in 1912. Three of her books have been published: *Picture Frames*, 1923; *Show Business*, 1926; *People Round the Corner*, 1927.

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON (Mrs. W. H. Probert), author of *The Gold Picayune*, is a granddaughter of Gen. Sam Houston, liberator of Texas. She was born in that State, but is now living in New York. This writer has published two novels and a volume of poems, and has contributed many short stories to the magazines.

EUGENE MANLOVE RHODES, author of *The Star of*

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Empire, is among our most successful writers of the typically Southwestern story. A native of Nebraska, Mr. Rhodes was a cowboy on the ranges of New Mexico for twenty-five years. Since he turned exclusively to fiction-writing, Mr. Rhodes made his home in Apalachin, N. Y., for many years, but is now living in New Mexico. His published volumes are: *Good Men and True*, 1911; *Bransford in Arcadia*, 1913; *The Desire of the Moth*, 1916; *West is West*, 1917; *Stepsons of Light*, 1921; *Say Now Shibboleth*, 1921; *Copper Streak Trail*, 1922; *Once in the Saddle*, 1927.

TED DEALEY, author of *Blackstone Does His Stuff*, is Editor of the Sunday Magazine Section of *The Dallas Morning News*. He has served that paper as Staff Correspondent and in other responsible capacities. Mr. Dealey was born in Texas, and was educated at the University of Texas and at Harvard University.

OLIVE MCCLINTIC JOHNSON, author of *Isn't Nature Wonderful?* is another Dallas writer. A series of her stories, published in *Collier's* in 1914, won her high place among the authentic interpreters of the Southern negro. Mrs. Johnson has contributed many stories to the magazines.

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